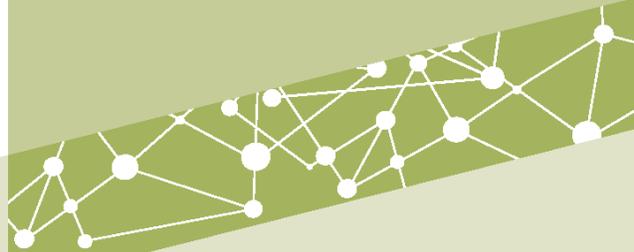


March 24 - 27, 2019

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# AdvancED® Engagement Review Report



## AdvancED® Performance Accreditation

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» **Results for:**  
**Fannin County School System**  
**2290 East First Street**  
Blue Ridge, Georgia 30513

## 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 Status and Index of Education Quality®(IEQ®).....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Insights from the Review .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Next Steps.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Team Roster .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>References and Readings .....</b>	<b>19</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.	Exceeds 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.	Exceeds 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.	Exceeds Expectations
1.8	Leaders engage stakeholders to support the achievement of the system's purpose and direction.	Exceeds Expectations
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.	Exceeds 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.	Exceeds Expectations
2.6	The system implements a process to ensure the curriculum is clearly aligned to standards and best practices.	Meets Expectations

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.	Exceeds Expectations
2.9	The system implements processes to identify and address the specialized needs of learners.	Emerging
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.	Emerging

## 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.	Exceeds Expectations
3.4	The system attracts and retains qualified personnel who support the system's purpose and direction.	Exceeds Expectations
3.5	The system integrates digital resources into teaching, learning, and operations to improve professional practice, student performance, and organizational effectiveness.	Exceeds 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.	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		
Total Number of eleot® Observations	85	
Environments	Rating	AIN
<b>Equitable Learning Environment</b>	2.72	2.86
Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs	2.01	1.89
Learners have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	3.46	3.74
Learners are treated in a fair, clear and consistent manner	3.47	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	1.93	2.06
<b>High Expectations Environment</b>	2.91	3.02
Learners strive to meet or are able to articulate the high expectations established by themselves and/or the teacher	3.00	3.17
Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	3.16	3.14
Learners demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work	2.71	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)	2.71	3.06
Learners take responsibility for and are self-directed in their learning	2.98	2.89
<b>Supportive Learning Environment</b>	3.34	3.61
Learners demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful	3.25	3.66

eleot® Observations		
<b>Total Number of eleot® Observations</b>	<b>85</b>	
<b>Environments</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>AIN</b>
Learners take risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	3.28	3.49
Learners are supported by the teacher, their peers and/or other resources to understand content and accomplish tasks	3.35	3.66
Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher	3.47	3.66
<b>Active Learning Environment</b>	<b>2.98</b>	<b>3.08</b>
Learners' discussions/dialogues/exchanges with each other and the teacher predominate	3.16	3.34
Learners make connections from content to real-life experiences	2.81	2.80
Learners are actively engaged in the learning activities	3.40	3.43
Learners collaborate with their peers to accomplish/complete projects, activities, tasks and/or assignments	2.55	2.74
<b>Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment</b>	<b>2.81</b>	<b>3.14</b>
Learners monitor their own learning progress or have mechanisms whereby their learning progress is monitored	2.69	3.20
Learners receive/respond to feedback (from teachers/peers/other resources) to improve understanding and/or revise work	3.02	3.37
Learners demonstrate and/or verbalize understanding of the lesson/content	2.96	3.37
Learners understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed	2.56	2.63
<b>Well-Managed Learning Environment</b>	<b>3.34</b>	<b>3.58</b>
Learners speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other	3.60	3.86
Learners demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others	3.45	3.83
Learners transition smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another	3.07	3.09
Learners use class time purposefully with minimal wasted time or disruptions	3.26	3.54
<b>Digital Learning Environment</b>	<b>2.14</b>	<b>1.50</b>
Learners use digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	2.52	1.60
Learners use digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	2.04	1.46
Learners use digital tools/technology to communicate and/or work collaboratively for learning	1.87	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 represent 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.

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

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

AdvancED will review the results of the Accreditation Engagement Review to make a final determination concerning accreditation status, including the appropriate next steps for your 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>	<b>355.97</b>	<b>AIN 5 Year IEQ Range</b>	<b>278.34 – 283.33</b>
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## 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 several themes that correlate to the continuous improvement process for enhancing the goals of the Fannin County School System. These themes present strengths and opportunities to guide the school system's improvement journey.

Interviews and documentation disclosed focused leadership of the board and superintendent with a very clear direction and commitment to continuous improvement for the Fannin County School System (FCSS). As evidenced through board minutes and interviews, the governing authority commits to the establishment and adherence to policies that promote the effective operations of the school system. Board members participate in multiple training opportunities and continuously provide leadership with the autonomy for day-to-day operations. An internal stakeholder stated that the board has earned Exemplary Board status by the Georgia School Boards Association for the past three years, thus showing proof that board members have internalized their training and their actions are aligned to the code of ethics. One board member stated, "If a board member even thinks about getting out of line, any one of us does not mind getting that board member back in line." Another board member shared, "Our best job was in selecting the superintendent. He is a dedicated, passionate, focused leader who has the ability to draw people together. He knows the talent of the school system and matches talent to job assignment." In addition to a strong governing board and superintendent, documentation and interviews revealed strong, effective School Governance Teams (SGT). In 2015, the system became a charter school system and SGTs were formed at each school," stated a system leader. Artifacts and interviews with SGT members revealed active team meetings at least six times per year with most teams meeting monthly. Records substantiated teamwork on school improvement plans, input into how the schools operate, and SGT training and professional learning. "In four of the five schools, the SGT has been involved in interviewing and making recommendations to the superintendent regarding the hiring of a new principal," stated an SGT member. "The superintendent is a hardworking, visionary leader who has a laser focus on improvement," stated a school leader. "He understands instruction and meets regularly with system and school leaders to ensure that everyone is working towards the mission of Developing Young Futures...Learning for Tomorrow, Today," shared an administrator. "Our superintendent is one who leads with passion and makes each of us want to give our best," stated a teacher. When asked about the superintendent, stakeholders used the following words to describe him: dedicated, hardworking, accessible, highly visible, transparent, focused, determined, and everywhere all the time. "One never hears I did. Instead, it is the team did," stated a school administrator. All stakeholder groups not only spoke of the strength of the superintendent but also included system-level administrators and the school-level leadership teams. "The entire leadership team, from the system level throughout all schools, is moving in the same direction,

focused on the vision of excellence for all students,” said a community leader. The laser focus on continuous improvement is further substantiated through the documentation on the collaborative process that was implemented to develop the new strategic plan for 2018-2022. The comprehensive process engaged community and stakeholder groups to create universal ownership and support for system improvement. Stakeholders shared highlights of the planning process that assisted planning and action teams in analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the system and developing/defining the mission, vision, beliefs/core values, and three goal areas. Those three strategic goal areas are attaining high levels of student achievement, developing organizational effectiveness, and ensuring stakeholder support and satisfaction. Records demonstrate how the system’s organizational structure is aligned with the strategic plan and how fiscal resources are allocated in a manner that supports the plan. “Every decision we make is directly connected to the strategic plan,” stated an internal stakeholder. The system is to be commended on its strong leadership that is focused on the success of the strategic plan and encourages this ongoing commitment so that it is deeply ingrained and protected throughout the operations of the school system.

Even with the strong leadership demonstrated by the superintendent, system leaders, and school administration, there is a documented need to expand the leadership development program and processes. Records indicate there is a leadership consortium, locally developed two years ago, for those persons already in senior leadership positions. The System Quality Factors diagnostic and the superintendent’s presentation to the Engagement Review Team included documentation of the need to expand leadership development to those persons who are interested and qualified to become leaders in the schools or system. Artifacts revealed that an Aspiring Leaders program was once in operation in the system but had been discontinued several years ago. “Within three years, a large number of our current leaders will be retirement eligible. As these persons decide to retire, we need a pool of qualified persons to draw from,” stated the superintendent. Another system leader shared, “We have a comprehensive induction program for new teachers but not for prospective leaders. We are likely missing an opportunity that may benefit our long-term success.” The school system is encouraged to develop formalized structures and processes for the cultivation of leadership so that the programs and practices are sustained over time.

Meaningful stakeholder engagement and intentional communication efforts are cornerstones of the school system’s success. Artifacts and interviews indicated that all stakeholder groups were included in the revision of the mission and vision and the development of the strategic plan. Business and community members, parents, staff, and students were well-represented in the groups interviewed by the Engagement Review Team, and each group spoke of the regularly scheduled sessions held to get their input. “Various groups are surveyed, and leaders meet with us to discuss survey results and ask for input on next steps for improvement,” stated an external stakeholder. Internal and external stakeholders spoke proudly about the community partnerships and how the community is personally involved in the schools’ continuous improvement efforts. One business owner spoke of how the public feels as if they are a part of the system. All external stakeholders shared their feelings of how the superintendent and staff are receptive and want their input. The chief of staff of the local hospital stated, “The schools are an integral part of our recruiting efforts when we recruit doctors to the area.” Interviews also revealed the involvement of the superintendent and other system leaders in such community-based groups as the Mountain Education Charter High School Board of Directors, Fannin County Development Authority, Fannin County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Fannin Regional Hospital Board of Trustees, and Fannin County Department of Health Executive Board. Internal stakeholders also feel their input is valued and they are heavily engaged in the collaborative, decision-making process of the school system. System leaders shared information about professional learning communities (PLCs) being conducted each month to review school data and make system-wide decisions to impact student achievement. School leadership teams told of their monthly meetings to

review school progress toward meeting the goals in the school improvement plan. Teachers spoke of daily collaborative planning times to review curriculum, pacing guides, and student performance data. In addition to daily planning, teachers participate in PLCs and/or data days to review student progress and make instructional decisions. Without exception, every stakeholder group spoke of their meaningful engagement in the collaborative culture for supporting learners in pursuing their goals.

Intentional communication efforts are directly connected to successful stakeholder engagement. The word, transparency, was heard repeatedly as internal and external stakeholder groups were interviewed. Interviews revealed how numerous surveys are administered each year and results are analyzed and used as a part of the continuous improvement process. Infinite Campus, Class DoJo, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media avenues are some of the many communication efforts of the school system. Students in grades six through twelve told of having their own Infinite Campus accounts, and at least half of all parents in the system have such accounts. Artifacts also revealed the traditional communication methods such as flyers, letters, school calendars, school marquees, system and school websites, and automated calling such as Remind 101. Staff and parents shared the importance of the parent liaisons. Four of the five schools have parent liaisons to lead parent advisory groups, spearhead volunteer programs, and keep parents informed, involved, and physically present in the schools on a daily basis. STEM nights, Author's Fairs, A Night at Hogwart's Literacy Night, and Family Fun Nights are some of the meaningful parent activities mentioned by parents and staff as memorable activities with high participation rates. Each School Governance Team (SGT) includes two parents and two community members. Interview groups had representatives of the SGTs who shared how meaningful their engagement is and how their input is truly valued. The governing board shared their use of Simbli, the comprehensive online software management system, that brings together their meetings, planning, policies and evaluations into one easy-to-use system that allows stakeholders easy access to any information needed at any time. Two of the most popular communication avenues mentioned by stakeholders are the student-operated radio station, Rebel Radio, and a student-led television program. A community member summed up communication efforts in the system by saying, "If you don't know what is going on, it's because you don't care." Active engagement of all stakeholder groups and frequent and varied communication efforts are currently expected throughout the school system. The review team encourages the system to ensure that these practices and programs continue to be deeply ingrained throughout the culture of the school system.

A caring, supportive, well-managed learning environment exists in the system. In many of the interviews, the words family, helpful, pride, trust, welcoming, positive culture, transparent, and building relationships were heard. The superintendent, as well as many other staff members, attended Fannin County Schools. We are like family; we are all about building relationships; we have a strong sense of community; and our hearts are in the right place were comments from interviews with administration and staff. The superintendent shared that he graduated from the system and then began as a substitute teacher. Before becoming superintendent, he told of working as a paraprofessional, teacher, assistant principal, principal, and director of technology. "I am proud of the system and pleased to have my daughter attend school here," said the superintendent. A teacher shared how she has worked in three school systems and this system is, by far, the best she has experienced. "Every staff member is willing to do what it takes for students. Also, there is always someone to pick you up when you are down," stated a staff member. During classroom observations, students demonstrated a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful throughout the schools. Congenial and supportive relationships were observed between teachers and students. On the Climate and Culture Parent Survey, parents characterized interactions with their child's school as respectful, supportive, helpful, and comfortable. On the Georgia health surveys, students reported adults in the school treat students with respect and that all students are treated fairly. One of the highest rated items on the survey was that the school has high standards for achievement and clear rules for

behavior. In interviews, students reported at they are expected to behave, and there have been no fights at the high school the entire year. All schools in the system earned a five-star School Climate Star Rating for 2017 and 2018 indicating a consistent, positive quality and character of school life. Numerous system and school leaders spoke with pride of this accomplishment as measured on a 1-5 scale using survey, student discipline, safe and substance-free, and attendance data. Team members observed pervasive evidence of a well-managed learning environment in classrooms across the system. Students spoke and interacted respectfully with their teachers and each other and followed classroom rules. Class time was purposefully used with little wasted time or disruptions. Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) has been implemented across the system for approximately nine years, and staff members were proud to share that all schools are at the operational level in their implementation status. A caring, supportive, well-managed learning environment is a cornerstone that is deeply ingrained throughout the culture and operations of the school system. The system is encouraged to continue the support and sustain the practices system-wide that are yielding results in improving student achievement and organizational effectiveness.

There is a culture of excellence and high expectations throughout the school system. With the first goal of the strategic plan being the attainment of high levels of student achievement, all artifacts and interviews substantiated the emphasis on high expectations. A stakeholder referenced higher expectations result in higher achievement; all schools are accountable for improving student achievement; and a quality education requires quality staff, programs, facilities, equipment, and technology as the three belief statements that are most directly correlated to the system's focus on high expectations. The system's 2018 College and Career Ready Index (CCRPI) is 81.8 as compared to the state CCRPI of 76.6; math and science scores on the state test, Milestones, are higher than the state averages for 2015 through 2018; and the graduation rate has continuously increased and is presently at 94 percent. "We have added academic coaches at every school, implemented STEM and STEAM initiatives, increased dual enrollment numbers, and begun the REACH scholarship program for promising students who wish to attend college," stated an administrator. An educator shared the designation of one school as a STEM certified school, another being a Title One High Progress Reward School, another as a Family Friendly Partnership Award School, and numerous grant awards as indicators of schools of excellence. A teacher stated, "We are expected to teach state standards, and each one of us is held to high standards." A parent shared, "Everybody rises to the occasion. The schools are constantly moving our children forward." "We are on the cutting edge and are expected to give 100 percent each day," said a principal. On the AdvancED Teaching and Learning Pedagogy survey taken by 259 certified staff members, the three highest rated responses all focused on high achievement. Artifacts revealed a concentration on high expectations, not just on student achievement, but in every aspect of the system's operations. "The governing board's designation as an exemplary board, the five-star School Climate Star Rating at all schools in the system in 2017 and 2018, and the bus garage's designation as an ASE Blue Certified Garage because of its excellent repairmen are more examples of the system's commitment to excellence," stated an internal stakeholder. There is a wealth of evidence regarding a culture of excellence and a laser focus on high expectations throughout the system. The review team encourages all stakeholders to practice and protect the system's commitment to high expectations so that the desire for excellence can become deeply ingrained and protected throughout the culture of the school system.

Strategic resource management that includes long-range planning and wise use of resources in support of the system's mission and vision is demonstrated throughout the school system. Financial records, as well as the facilities plan, have evidence of adherence to the established budgets. Continuous monitoring is evident through interviews and artifact/records reviews. The finance director shared a healthy fund balance, and documentation showed that the system has enjoyed the passage of four Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (ESPLOST) initiatives bringing in approximately \$67.4 million for school facilities, technology infrastructure and

equipment, buses, and other approved needs. A fifth ESPLOST was just recently passed by an 87 percent margin. Records show the construction of a performing arts center, a new gym, stadium, classrooms, renovations, and an agricultural facility have been completed, and the system is debt free. “We not only take pride in updated, clean and well-maintained buildings and grounds, but we are constantly analyzing enrollment projections and looking at programmatic needs as we revisit our capital improvement plan each year,” shared a system leader. Students and staff continually voiced their convictions that they have access to informational resources and materials that support their needs, interests, and the teaching and learning programs. “Community partnerships and representatives from a variety of businesses support our educational efforts, thus demonstrating the commitment of external stakeholders to be engaged in our strategic resource management process,” shared a system leader. Administrators shared information as to the level of technology equipment at each school, as well as the support for its usage. “The system strives to engage students in innovative ways through the use of student-issued Chromebook devices for all students in grades six through twelve,” stated the superintendent. Classroom observations and documentation indicated classroom computer carts are shared, as well as computer labs, for all students in the lower grades. All school campuses have robust Wi-Fi connectivity, and technology instructional support personnel are shared among schools. “We still have work to do with adding needed technology and some of our ESPLOST funds are being dedicated to the purchase of additional technology equipment,” shared an administrator. Although technology has been at the forefront of the school system’s initiatives, there is a need to more effectively integrate the use of digital tools in teaching and learning. In approximately 50 percent of the classroom observations conducted by the Engagement Review Team there was effective use of digital tools by students. High-quality classrooms are encouraged to find innovative and authentic ways to integrate student use of technology in a way that fosters a positive and strong digital learning environment.

Having a high-quality workforce is another important component of strategic resource management. Records and interviews indicate that the teacher retention rate is and has been above the state average for years. “We don’t pay the salaries that some of the wealthier systems pay, but we do everything possible to support our people,” stated a leader. “The system knows that professional development is key to improving the learning environment, student achievement, and system effectiveness. Therefore, we have developed a robust professional learning program,” shared a system administrator. Records indicate that regularly scheduled PLCs operate throughout the system as a platform for continuous development and improvement of staff. “Newly hired teachers and staff are provided structured induction and mentoring programs to ensure their success,” stated a school leader. Academic coaches in each school provide continuing instructional support for teachers. Records show that additional teachers have been added to reduce class size to better meet the needs of students; a school nurse and a school resource officer have been added for each campus; graduation coaches have been added at the middle and high schools; parent liaisons are at four of the five schools; Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) offerings have increased; and art, music, and drama teachers have been maintained in the schools while many other systems have had to reduce the fine arts offerings. As noted, one of the strengths of the school system lies in securing and allocating resources, having well-maintained and updated facilities, and having strong and effective support systems and training opportunities for staff. Standard operating procedures (SOPs) and processes are also implemented to ensure organizational effectiveness. Documented procedures for such routine tasks as purchasing, finance, and hiring were shared. Staff also shared ways they hold each other accountable to the adherence of these SOPs to ensure effective and efficient routine operations. Strengths of the transportation system were substantiated during interviews and review of documentation. “All buses have two-way communication systems with at least seven cameras per bus; 70 percent of the buses have air-conditioning; and at least seven of the buses have WiFi,” stated a system administrator. “The bus garage is top of the line, and we continually earn top levels of certification because of highly qualified repair technicians,” stated a supervisor.

An emphasis on safety is a critical component of strategic resource management. “Since one of the system’s core beliefs is a safe and secure environment is essential for teaching and learning, a portion of the ESPLOST funds is allocated for safety,” stated a system leader. Interviews and school visits revealed keyless entry systems for all schools with all staff members and the high school students having key cards. “Cards can be de-activated, and a complete lockdown is possible via the web with one click,” stated the administrator in charge of safety measures. Students told of the safety app they now have on their phones to report anonymously any student who is bullying others or any activity that needs to be reported to school officials. “The cameras and WiFi on buses also support the system’s safety plan,” shared a school administrator. School resource officers at every campus and the implementation of an emergency management plan with procedures for bomb threats, weapons on campus, severe weather conditions, and natural disasters are key components of the overall safety measures for the school system and ones for which every stakeholder group voiced support. The system is to be commended on its resource allocations that are consistently aligned to the identified goals and key priorities. Evidence indicates there is still a need to more effectively integrate digital resources into teaching and learning at all levels in order to sustain growth and improvement over time.

Even with the school system’s laser focus on continuous improvement, there is evidence of a need to implement a more formalized process to continuously assess academic and organizational programs and services to sustain improvements in student learning. One example of this is with the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). “The various components of MTSS include screening, progress monitoring, a multi-level prevention system, and data-based decision making. Instead of each school using whatever screener it so desired, the system chose, for the first time last year, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) as the universal screener to be used at every school twice per year,” stated a school leader. When asked about the various reports that are available with MAP testing and how learning has been personalized based on MAP results, most teachers shared that they are in the beginning stages of using MAP and will be extending their learning with further training. A system leader discussed plans for eventually using the higher-level MAP reports to drive improvement across schools and the system. In the System Quality Factors diagnostic, a need was noted to revise the MTSS protocols to include evidence-based interventions and develop school-specific plans to increase student goal setting, engagement, and self-monitoring of performance.

Although the caring, supportive, and nurturing environment is a strength of the school system, the adult advocacy component could be more formalized. Interviews with students, teachers, and principals indicated that students have persons they are comfortable reaching out to if they are being bullied or have issues that are bothering them. Yet, very few could say they had an assigned advocate with whom they meet on a periodic basis. All evidence indicated informal structures that did not have clearly defined activities, times, and resources for students to develop positive relationships with adults and peers. In addition, some of the interviews revealed a need to offer more support for students in terms of social and emotional development. “There is only one social worker for the entire school system. With all the pressure connected with social media and with some of the mental health issues of some students, even more concentrated support is needed for identified students,” shared a school administrator. “There are wounded students in some of our classrooms, students who suffer from hopelessness and are beyond the point of at-risk,” stated another school administrator. The school system is encouraged to continue all the successful efforts that have created the caring and supportive environment and to use formal processes to analyze and use data to determine the necessary next steps to support all students emotionally and socially.

In addition to the need to expand the leadership development program, the superintendent addressed the need to develop structures to ensure the sustainability of professional learning, particularly as it relates to the literacy

grant and the 1:1 initiative. The SQF noted strong professional development opportunities but a need to monitor more closely the implementation of new practices. “We often complete exit surveys following professional learning initiatives, but we sometimes do not nurture a new implementation long enough to guarantee that we have made a sustainable positive change,” stated a system leader. “We are in year two of implementation of the literacy grant system-wide and must be mindful of this as the grant is implemented through 2020,” shared a system leader. “Also, professional learning communities (PLCs) have been in use for years in the system, but there is no formalized assessment of the quality of PLCs. If we are going to improve student learning and instructional practices, we need to develop system-wide indicators of high-quality PLCs and develop an evaluation instrument for PLCs related to the high-quality indicators,” shared a system leader. Records substantiate a school system that is focused on high expectations and excellence for all students, yet there is limited longitudinal data due to the length of implementation for some of the major initiatives. Formalizing processes and procedures to continuously assess academic and organizational programs and services to ensure they are systemic and systematic is encouraged so that efficiency and effectiveness can be sustained.

There are many institutionalized, high-quality programs and initiatives in the system. The themes present opportunities for continued growth in an already excellent system that could positively impact student achievement and system progress.

## 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
<p><b>Dr. Cheryl Allread, Lead Evaluator</b></p>	<p>Cheryl Allread's career spans over 47 years. She retired from Marion County Schools in South Carolina after having taught math and science for seven years and serving as principal for 11 years, as assistant superintendent for instruction for 11 years, and as district superintendent for seven years. After retirement from 36 years working in Marion County, she began working as a consultant with the South Carolina State Department of Education, serving as the liaison for low-performing schools/Palmetto Priority Schools. She also conducted academic audits, served as a principal mentor, and served as a leadership coach in instructional supervision. Dr. Allread currently works as lead evaluator for AdvancED in schools and systems across the United States and internationally, as well as continuing to work as a consultant with schools and systems in instructional supervision.</p>
<p><b>Dr. Jennifer Brown</b></p>	<p>Jennifer Brown earned her Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in secondary mathematics education from Troy State University and her Doctor of Education in curriculum and instruction from Valdosta State University. She has spent her entire educational career in the Early County School System in Blakely, Georgia. Jennifer Brown spent twenty years at Early County High School as a mathematics teacher and coach before moving to the central office as the system's curriculum director. She now serves as assistant superintendent with her main duties being human resources, federal programs, curriculum, and assessment.</p>
<p><b>Dr. T.C. Culver</b></p>	<p>Terence Culver is the principal of Belle Terre Elementary School in Flagler School District, Palm Coast, Florida. In that position, he leads a staff of over 100 teachers and staff members to set goals and ensure students meet their learning objectives. He oversees the school's day-to-day operations while managing a school budget and creating a safe, high-quality learning environment for over 1600 students. Dr. Culver has experience working at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. He has served as a team member with engagement review teams for over ten years.</p>

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
<p><b>Dr. Rhonda Hightower</b></p>	<p>Rhonda Hightower currently serves as the associate superintendent for Laurens County School System in Georgia. Dr. Hightower earned a doctorate degree in educational leadership from Georgia Southern University. She also holds an undergraduate degree in early childhood education from Brewton Parker College, as well as a master’s and a specialist degree from Georgia College and State University. Dr. Hightower’s journey in education reflects experiences from many different perspectives of public education including the board of education secretary, paraprofessional, teacher, assistant principal, principal, director, and associate superintendent. Her professional experiences include service to many different councils including the Governor’s Education Advisory Council and the Teacher Education Program Advisory Council for Middle Georgia State College. Other professional experiences include multiple presentations to organizations and civic groups including a presentation for the 2017 Georgia Association of Curriculum Supervisors Conference and most recently the 2019 Georgia Association of Educational Leaders Conference. Dr. Hightower has been afforded several opportunities to increase her level of expertise related to AdvancED and the focus of school improvement as she has served on numerous system review teams.</p>
<p><b>Ms. Jennifer Reese</b></p>	<p>Jennifer Reese is the assistant principal of Leroy Massey Elementary School, the largest elementary school in the Chattooga County School System in Georgia. She has served as a classroom teacher (reading, English/language arts, economics, and American history), an academic coach, and assistant principal. Her 19 years in education have included experiences at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Ms. Reese earned her bachelor’s, master’s, and education specialist degrees from Jacksonville State University in Jacksonville, Alabama.</p>

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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.

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