

Report of the  
External Review Team  
for  
Spartanburg County School District  
#4

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# Introduction

The External Review is an integral component of AdvancED Performance Accreditation and provides the institution with a comprehensive evaluation guided by the results of diagnostic instruments, in-depth review of data and documentation, and the professional judgment of a team of qualified and highly trained evaluators. A series of diagnostic instruments examines the impact of teaching and learning on student performance, the capacity of leadership to effect continuous improvement, and the degree to which the institution optimizes its use of available resources to facilitate and support student success. The results of this evaluation are represented in the Index of Education Quality (IEQ™) and through critical observations, namely, Powerful Practices, Opportunities for Improvement, and Improvement Priorities.

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

Institutions seeking to gain or retain accreditation must meet AdvancED Standards specific to their institution type, demonstrate acceptable levels of student performance and the continuous improvement of student performance, and provide evidence of stakeholder engagement and satisfaction. The power of AdvancED Performance Accreditation lies in the connections and linkages between and among the conditions, processes, and practices within a system that impact student performance and organizational effectiveness.

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

The AdvancED External Review Team uses AdvancED Standards, associated indicators and criteria related to student performance and stakeholder engagement to guide its evaluation. The Team examines adherence to standards as well as how the institution functions as a whole and embodies the practices and characteristics expected of an accredited institution. The Standards, indicators and related criteria are evaluated using indicator-specific performance levels. The Team rates each indicator and criterion on a scale of 1 to 4. The final scores assigned to the indicators and criteria represent the average of the External Review Team members' individual ratings.

The External Review is the hallmark of AdvancED Performance Accreditation. It energizes and equips the institution's leadership and stakeholders to achieve higher levels of performance and address those areas that

may be hindering efforts to reach desired performance levels. External Review is a rigorous process that includes the in-depth examination of evidence and relevant data, interviews with all stakeholder groups, and extensive observations of learning, instruction, and operations.

## Use of Diagnostic Tools

A key to examining the institution is the design and use of diagnostic tools that reveal the effectiveness with which an institution creates conditions and implements processes and practices that impact student performance and success. In preparation for the External Review the institution conducted a Self Assessment that applied the standards and criteria for accreditation. The institution provided evidence to support its conclusions vis a vis organizational effectiveness in ensuring acceptable and improving levels of student performance.

- an indicator-based tool that connects the specific elements of the criteria to evidence gathered by the team;
- a student performance analytic that examines the quality of assessment instruments used by the institution, the integrity of the administration of the assessment to students, the quality of the learning results including the impact of instruction on student learning at all levels of performance, and the equity of learning that examines the results of student learning across all demographics;
- a stakeholder engagement instrument that examines the fidelity of administration and results of perception surveys seeking the perspective of students, parents, and teachers;
- a state-of-the-art, learner-centric observation instrument, the Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™) that quantifies students' engagement, attitudes and dispositions organized in 7 environments: Equitable Learning, High Expectations, Supportive Learning, Active Learning, Progress Monitoring and Feedback, Well-Managed Learning, and Digital Learning. All evaluators must be trained, reach acceptable levels of inter-rater reliability, and certified to use this research-based and validated instrument.

The External Review Team's findings and critical observations are shared in this report through the IEQ™ results as well as through the identification of Powerful Practices, Opportunities for Improvement, and Improvement Priorities.

## Index of Education Quality

In the past, accreditation reviews resulted in an accreditation recommendation on status. Labels such as advised, warned, probation, or all clear were used to describe the status of a school relative to the AdvancED Standards and other evaluative criteria. Beginning in the 2013-14 school year, AdvancED introduced a new framework to describe the results of an accreditation review. Consistent with the modern focus of accreditation on continuous improvement with an emphasis on student success, AdvancED introduced an innovative and state-of-the-art framework for diagnosing and revealing institutional performance called the Index of Education Quality (IEQ™). The IEQ™ comprises three domains of performance: 1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; 2) the capacity of leadership to guide the institution toward the achievement of its

vision and strategic priorities; and 3) use of resources to support and optimize learning. Therefore, your institution will no longer receive an accreditation status. Instead, your institution will be accredited with an IEQ™ score. In the case where an institution is failing to meet established criteria, the accreditation will be under review thereby requiring frequent monitoring and demonstrated improvement.

The three domains of performance are derived from the AdvancED Standards and associated indicators, the analysis of student performance, and the engagement and feedback of stakeholders. Within each domain institutions can connect to the individual performance levels that are applied in support of the AdvancED Standards and evaluative criteria. Within the performance levels are detailed descriptors that serve as a valuable source of guidance for continuous improvement. Upon review of the findings in this report and building on their Powerful Practices, institutional leaders should work with their staff to review and understand the evidence and rationale for each Opportunity for Improvement and Improvement Priority as well as the corresponding pathway to improvement described in the performance levels of the selected indicator(s).

The IEQ™ provides a new framework that recognizes and supports the journey of continuous improvement. An institution's IEQ™ is the starting point for continuous improvement. Subsequent actions for improvement and evidence that these have had a positive impact will raise the institution's IEQ™ score.

## Benchmark Data

Throughout this report, AdvancED provides benchmark data for each indicator and for each component of the evaluative criteria. These benchmark data represent the overall averages across the entire AdvancED Network for your institution type. Thus, the AdvancED Network average provides an extraordinary opportunity for institutions to understand their context on a global scale rather than simply compared to a state, region, or country.

It is important to understand that the AdvancED Network averages are provided primarily to serve as a tool for continuous improvement and not as a measure of quality in and of itself. Benchmark data, when wisely employed, have a unique capacity to help institutions identify and leverage their strengths and areas of improvement to significantly impact student learning.

## Powerful Practices

A key to continuous improvement is the institution's ability to learn from and build upon its most effective and impactful practices. Such practices serve as critical leverage points necessary to guide, support and ensure continuous improvement. A hallmark of the accreditation process is its commitment to identifying with evidence, the conditions, processes and practices that are having the most significant impact on student performance and institutional effectiveness. Throughout this report, the External Review Team has captured and defined Powerful Practices. These noteworthy practices are essential to the institution's effort to continue its journey of improvement.

## Opportunities for Improvement

Every institution can and must improve no matter what levels of performance it has achieved in its past. During the process of the review, the External Review Team identified areas of improvement where the institution is meeting the expectations for accreditation but in the professional judgment of the Team these are Opportunities for Improvement that should be considered by the institution. Using the criteria described in the corresponding rubric(s) to the Opportunity for Improvement, the institution can identify what elements of practice must be addressed to guide the improvement.

## Improvement Priorities

The expectations for accreditation are clearly defined in a series of the rubric-based AdvancED Standards, indicators and evaluative criteria focused on the impact of teaching and learning on student performance, the capacity of the institution to be guided by effective leadership, and the allocation and use of resources to support student learning. As such, the External Review Team reviewed, analyzed and deliberated over significant bodies of evidence provided by the institution and gathered by the Team during the process. In the professional judgment of the Team as well as the results of the diagnostic process, the Team defined, with rationale, Improvement Priorities. The priorities must be addressed in a timely manner by the institution to retain and improve their accreditation performance as represented by the IEQ™. Improvement Priorities serve as the basis for the follow-up and monitoring process that will begin upon conclusion of the External Review. The institution must complete and submit an Accreditation Progress Report within two years of the External Review. The report must include actions taken by the institution to address the Improvement Priorities along with the corresponding evidence and results. The IEQ™ will be recalculated by AdvancED upon review of the evidence and results associated with the Improvement Priorities.

## The Review

The Spartanburg County School District #4 External Review Team convened at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, February 28, 2016 in the hotel provided by the system. System personnel had made appropriate arrangements with the hotel in Duncan, South Carolina, for a very comfortable stay. Because Woodruff, South Carolina is a small city, system personnel chose to house the Team in Duncan, only a few miles from Woodruff. On Sunday evening the Team reviewed documents, discussed the information that had been supplied digitally by the system, planned for Monday activities and enjoyed a dinner provided by system personnel.

The Team was comprised of the Lead Evaluator from Louisiana, one out-of-state team member from Utah, an Associate Lead Evaluator from in-state and two resident South Carolina team members. They noted throughout the External Review the close attention to detail, careful planning, and deliberate actions to facilitate the External Review that were found to be common traits of District #4 personnel. All aspects of the External Review and its execution were extremely well-planned and executed which greatly facilitated the work of the Team and added to the quality of the findings.

Previous to the Sunday afternoon meeting in Duncan, the Team utilized the AdvancED Team Workspace to

share AdvancED documents, tools, the system documents and the school Accreditation Reports. The Team had also met via conference call to establish team assignments and responsibilities, discuss the evidence and artifacts available at the time, and establish team processes that were utilized throughout the preparations and the Review.

On Monday, the Team was transported to the system central office for a day of meetings with central office personnel, system stakeholders and school principals. These meetings, interviews and the examination of artifacts and evidence took place smoothly and efficiently according to the schedule agreed upon by the Team and system personnel. At the end of the workday the Team was transported back to the hotel for dinner and the work session planned for the evening. Noted again were the very careful planning and deliberate steps taken by the system to facilitate the External Review, the close friendships and camaraderie among the personnel, and the intense focus on their purpose, which the superintendent summarized as: ". . . making decisions on the basis of what's best for students." This phrase was heard repeatedly throughout the Review.

All schools in the system were visited on Tuesday. Eleot™ observations were conducted, as well as interviews with students, teachers and school personnel. The school visits were notable because of the very consistent focus on quality teaching and learning in every school. Teachers echoed the sentiment of the stakeholders interviewed the day before: "We want our students to be the best!"

At the end of the day, the Team returned to the hotel for data entry, dinner and the evening work session. Data from the eleot™ observations were entered smoothly and the Team enjoyed another dinner supplied by local restaurants and facilitated by system personnel. During the work session the Team continued to share data across the Standards and complete the final round of Indicator ratings.

The Team was transported on Wednesday morning to the central office for the scheduled day of work. The work sessions continued through lunch and concluded with the Exit Report which was presented to the school board, local stakeholders and central office and school personnel.

The Team extends their thanks to all personnel for their generous hospitality and for their concerted, thorough efforts on their Internal Review. The quality of the External Review was indicative of how the system was thorough and systematic in their processes and guided all to work in harmony for the good of their students. System personnel exhibited significant camaraderie, unity, sense of purpose and focus on student performance. Their efforts have been rewarded by steady growth and student performance that have been recognized state-wide and nationally.

The range of surveys conducted by the system included the required AdvancED surveys and the results corroborated the high levels of stakeholder involvement and support for the system. The excitement for their accreditation and their achievements was contagious, particularly at the school level. Personnel across the system voiced their belief in the accreditation process as a tool to guide their growth. The Team found a notable level of alignment and common practices among the schools, this finding supported by the frank statements of school personnel during visits to the schools. The strong eleot™ scores from the classroom observations corroborated the strengths of school level practices, intentionally nurtured by the system, that

have supported students in their learning and high academic performance.

Stakeholders were interviewed by members of the External Review Team to gain their perspectives on topics relevant to the institution's effectiveness and student performance. The feedback gained through the stakeholder interviews was considered with other evidences and data to support the findings of the External Review. The following chart depicts the numbers of persons interviewed representative of various stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder Interviewed	Number
Superintendents	1
Board Members	6
Administrators	20
Instructional Staff	31
Support Staff	9
Students	57
Parents/Community/Business Leaders	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>

# Results

## Teaching and Learning Impact

The impact of teaching and learning on student achievement is the primary expectation of every institution. The relationship between teacher and learner must be productive and effective for student success. The impact of teaching and learning includes an analysis of student performance results, instructional quality, learner and family engagement, support services for student learning, curriculum quality and efficacy, and college and career readiness data. These are all key indicators of an institution's impact on teaching and learning.

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

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

Institutions with strong improvement processes move beyond anxiety about the current reality and focus on priorities and initiatives for the future. Using results, i.e., data and other information, to guide continuous improvement is key to an institution's success. A study conducted by Datnow, Park, and Wohlstetter (2007) from the Center on Educational Governance at the University of Southern California indicated that data can shed light on existing areas of strength and weakness and also guide improvement strategies in a systematic and strategic manner (Dembosky, J., Pane, J., Barney, H., & Christina, R., 2005). The study also identified six

key strategies that performance-driven systems use: (1) building a foundation for data-driven decision making, (2) establishing a culture of data use and continuous improvement, (3) investing in an information management system, (4) selecting the right data, (5) building institutional capacity for data-driven decision making, and (6) analyzing and acting on data to improve performance. Other research studies, though largely without comparison groups, suggested that data-driven decision-making has the potential to increase student performance (Alwin, 2002; Doyle, 2003; Lafee, 2002; McIntire, 2002).

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

### Standard 3 - Teaching and Assessing for Learning

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
3.1	The system's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at the next level.	3.00	2.68
3.2	Curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout the system are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice.	3.00	2.50
3.3	Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	2.83	2.55
3.4	System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	3.00	2.73
3.5	The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.	3.50	2.57
3.6	Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning.	3.00	2.48
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	3.33	2.60

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
3.8	The system and all of its schools engage families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keep them informed of their children's learning progress.	3.00	2.92
3.9	The system designs and evaluates structures in all schools whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the student's school who supports that student's educational experience.	3.50	2.40
3.10	Grading and reporting are based on clearly defined criteria that represent the attainment of content knowledge and skills and are consistent across grade levels and courses.	3.00	2.53
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	3.17	2.64
3.12	The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	3.00	2.66

### Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
5.1	The system establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	3.00	2.66
5.2	Professional and support staff continuously collect, analyze and apply learning from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data about student learning, instruction, program evaluation, and organizational conditions that support learning.	3.00	2.41
5.3	Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.	2.33	2.15
5.4	The school system engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level.	3.00	2.46
5.5	System and school leaders monitor and communicate comprehensive information about student learning, school performance, and the achievement of system and school improvement goals to stakeholders.	3.50	2.72

### Student Performance Diagnostic

The quality of assessments used to measure student learning, assurance that assessments are administered with procedural fidelity and appropriate accommodations, assessment results that reflect the quality of

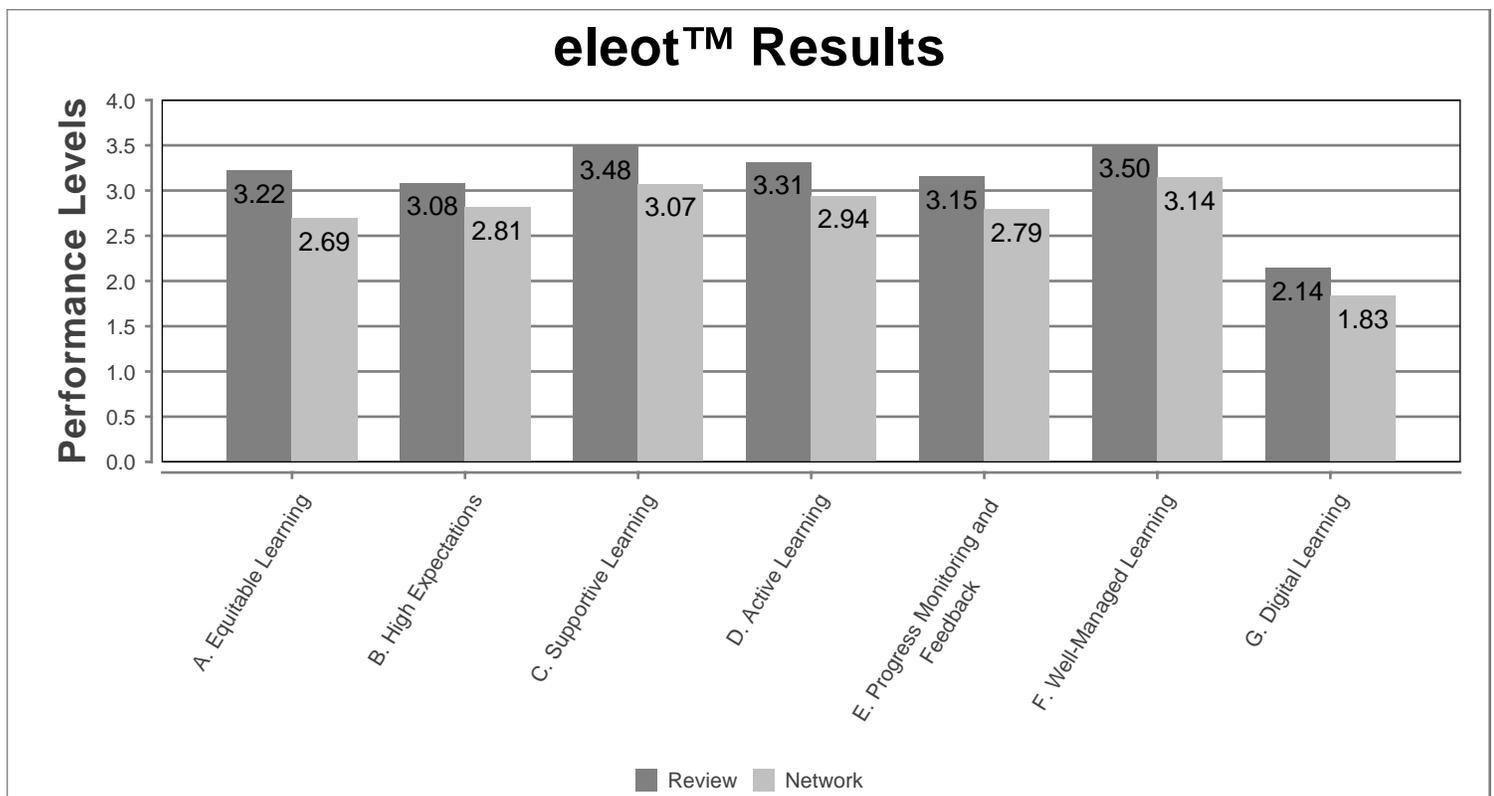
learning, and closing gaps in achievement among subpopulations of students are all important indicators for evaluating overall student performance.

Evaluative Criteria	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
Assessment Quality	4.00	3.28
Test Administration	4.00	3.50
Equity of Learning	3.00	2.44
Quality of Learning	4.00	2.97

## Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™)

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

Observations of classrooms or other learning venues are conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes per observation. Every member of the External Review Team is required to be trained and pass a certification exam that establishes inter-rater reliability. Team members conduct multiple observations during the review process and provide ratings on 30 items based on a four-point scale (4=very evident; 3=evident; 2=somewhat evident; and 1=not observed). The following provides the aggregate average score across multiple observations for each of the seven learning environments included in eleot™ as well as benchmark results across the AdvancED Network.



A total of sixty-seven eleot™ observations and a number of informal walkthrough observations were conducted in all of the schools of the system. Team Members interviewed thirty-one teachers, fifty-seven students and nine support staff while at the schools. The observations and interviews on Tuesday greatly broadened the understanding of the system- how the system provided the education processes for students, their successes and their challenges.

The eleot™ observations resulted in a system picture of thoughtful, deliberate instruction delivered to students for acquisition of knowledge and skills aligned with the high expectations of the system for student performance. The classroom visits were conducted across the system in core classrooms as well as elective courses per the AdvancED observation protocol. The seven learning environments were observed and results tallied to produce a snapshot of the school's learning environment.

The eleot™ averages for all seven domains were above the AdvancED Network (AEN) scores which was indicative of the culture deliberately established by the system, focused on "what is best for students." The AEN score provided a basis for comparison between the school's scores and those of similar institutions accredited by AdvancED.

The Team continually noted in classrooms and across the system the culture of high expectations for behavior and performance. The system's Purpose states: "Spartanburg School District Four exists to impact and empower students for the future through high expectations, academic rigor, supportive relationships, and the development of a strong work ethic in a safe and orderly environment."

Students across the system benefited from the highly developed culture of respect, learning and expectations that were deliberately established and systemically supported by system leaders and classroom educators. All stakeholders affirmed: "We expect high quality and success." The Team observed student engagement supported by a wide range of learning activities that included individual written or oral responses to questions or tasks that were presented to them, hands-on learning, higher-order thinking activities, small group work; and purposely designed integration of technology into learning. Students were often involved in quality class discussions, both teacher and student led, and strived to meet the expectations of the teachers, responding to the teachers and their peers in a positive, respectful manner.

Classroom management across the system was very strong as the high score in the "Well-Managed Learning Environment" indicated. Teachers were proactive and utilized their experience and relationships with the students to keep them engaged.

The Well-Managed Learning Environment scored 3.50 compared to 3.13 on the AEN.

Speaking and interacting respectfully with teachers and peers scored high along with following classroom rules and working well with others. These scores were high because of the high expectations and culture that were consistently maintained throughout the schools. Within this domain were indicators addressing classroom transitions that were smoothly and efficiently executed and collaboration with other students during student-centered activities, both of which were lower scores. The tendency of many classrooms toward large group and teacher-centered instruction caused fewer classroom transitions to be observed. Student collaboration was often large group discussion which afforded less opportunity for collaboration. Many examples of small group student collaboration were observed in various formats that were shared among the classroom professionals

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The Supportive Learning Environment score of 3.48 is above the AEN of 3.06.

The Team found students to be very positive about the learning experiences in their classrooms. Classrooms exhibited high rates of on-task behaviors and engagement even in those where instruction was more traditional. Students were attentive and rose to the expectations of the teachers. The Team noted that students ventured their own opinions and ideas in many classrooms, challenging the thinking of their peers and teachers, seeming to know that their thoughts would be considered positively. However, taking risks scored lowest of the indicators in this environment because of the tendency toward large-group, teacher-centered instruction found in many classrooms.

The Active Learning Environment score of 3.31 is above the AEN of 2.94.

The stronger indicators on active engagement in discussions and activities were evident in this environment. Teachers facilitated some opportunities to make connections between learning and students' lives but the Team saw this as an area for further development. The Team noted the free-flow of comfortable conversations among students as well as between students and teachers. .

The Equitable Learning Environment scored 3.22 compared to the AEN score of 2.69.

This score confirmed that students had equal access to classroom instruction and activities and knew that behavioral expectations were fair and consistently applied. The score supported the commendable behavior, on-task behaviors and engagement levels the Team observed in classrooms. A strength in this environment was the use and fairness of rules and consequences. Also strong was equal access to activities, instruction and support enjoyed by students. Together these strong indicators demonstrated the established culture across classrooms in the system. A lower indicator for this environment concerned opportunities for students to learn about other students in the classrooms, their cultures and differences.

Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment scored 3.15 in comparison to the AEN of 2.79.

Students demonstrated their understanding of the content being presented through completion of the work expected and through participation in classroom activities. The Team noted indications that students understood how their work was assessed in many classrooms. This finding was related to the teacher-centered model of instruction, the provision of examples of the product expected from students, and teachers individualizing instruction and checking for understanding of that instruction.

The High Expectations Environment scored 3.08 in comparison to the AEN score of 2.81

The Team observed that students knew and strived to meet the high expectations established by the teacher and were tasked with activities and learning that were attainable. One student told an observer: "He always makes learning fun. We get to work in groups a lot, but we still have to figure stuff out on our own." Engaging discussions were witnessed that challenged student knowledge and thinking. Learning tasks and responding to questioning that required higher order thinking (e.g., applying, evaluating, synthesizing) were definite areas to

strengthen.

The Digital Learning Environment score of 2.14 is above the AEN of 1.82

The 2.14 score is a commendable score and indicated the progress the system was making in technology-supported teaching and learning.

The Team found quite a number of instances in which technology was being used in large group, display fashion, to communicate and work collaboratively for learning. This indicated the willingness of teachers to integrate technology into their teaching and learning practices. In addition, a number of very skillful, intentionally constructed technology-supported and facilitated lessons were observed that caused the Digital Environment score to be higher than the AEN. These lessons were confirmation of how the deliberate, thoughtful infusion of technology into the classrooms and learning environments resulted in very effective uses and practices with technology. Room for growth was apparent using digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, to create original works for learning, support differentiation and higher order learning tasks, and to facilitate collaboration and communication to provide highly productive learning situations.

Eleot™ classroom observations confirmed that there was an environment of caring and mutual respect among the classroom teachers and students that was pervasive across the system. Students generally entered the classrooms in an orderly fashion and were aware of what was expected of them when they arrived. Teachers greeted students upon arrival and utilized a minimum amount of time to complete the routine daily items such as taking attendance. Although the Team noted a limited number of exemplars in the classrooms visited, teachers commonly provided generalized feedback in large group as assignments were reviewed with students. A great number of instances were observed of teachers providing individualized review and feedback on assignments though this was not determined to be a systemic practice.

The following eleot™ data summary provides a breakdown of average scores in each of the seven learning environments as well as for each Indicator. The Team discussed how effectively the strong scores in each environment identified strong classroom practices that have kept student and system performance at strong levels. These practices should be clearly defined, strengthened, and used as models for improvement. At the same time, the lower Indicator scores identified areas for improvement that, when addressed through systemic alignment and improvement processes, will provide improvement across the spectrum of Indicators.

**eleot™ Data Summary**

<b>A. Equitable Learning</b>			<b>%</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Very Evident</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Somewhat Evident</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
1.	2.88	Has differentiated learning opportunities and activities that meet her/his needs	38.81%	25.37%	20.90%	14.93%
2.	3.66	Has equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	71.64%	23.88%	2.99%	1.49%
3.	3.78	Knows that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied	79.10%	19.40%	1.49%	0.00%
4.	2.55	Has ongoing opportunities to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/differences	31.34%	19.40%	22.39%	26.87%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.22</b>						

<b>B. High Expectations</b>			<b>%</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Very Evident</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Somewhat Evident</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
1.	3.60	Knows and strives to meet the high expectations established by the teacher	64.18%	31.34%	4.48%	0.00%
2.	3.37	Is tasked with activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	49.25%	38.81%	11.94%	0.00%
3.	2.28	Is provided exemplars of high quality work	29.85%	13.43%	11.94%	44.78%
4.	3.18	Is engaged in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks	41.79%	37.31%	17.91%	2.99%
5.	2.96	Is asked and responds to questions that require higher order thinking (e.g., applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	35.82%	34.33%	19.40%	10.45%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.08</b>						

C. Supportive Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.70	Demonstrates or expresses that learning experiences are positive	71.64%	26.87%	1.49%	0.00%
2.	3.75	Demonstrates positive attitude about the classroom and learning	76.12%	22.39%	1.49%	0.00%
3.	3.36	Takes risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	53.73%	31.34%	11.94%	2.99%
4.	3.46	Is provided support and assistance to understand content and accomplish tasks	58.21%	29.85%	11.94%	0.00%
5.	3.13	Is provided additional/alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level of challenge for her/his needs	47.76%	26.87%	16.42%	8.96%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.48</b>						

D. Active Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.42	Has several opportunities to engage in discussions with teacher and other students	61.19%	20.90%	16.42%	1.49%
2.	2.88	Makes connections from content to real-life experiences	38.81%	29.85%	11.94%	19.40%
3.	3.64	Is actively engaged in the learning activities	70.15%	23.88%	5.97%	0.00%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.31</b>						

E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.01	Is asked and/or quizzed about individual progress/learning	41.79%	28.36%	19.40%	10.45%
2.	3.36	Responds to teacher feedback to improve understanding	52.24%	32.84%	13.43%	1.49%
3.	3.45	Demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of the lesson/content	50.75%	44.78%	2.99%	1.49%
4.	2.97	Understands how her/his work is assessed	46.27%	20.90%	16.42%	16.42%
5.	2.97	Has opportunities to revise/improve work based on feedback	41.79%	25.37%	20.90%	11.94%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.15</b>						

F. Well-Managed Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.66	Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers	71.64%	23.88%	2.99%	1.49%
2.	3.69	Follows classroom rules and works well with others	73.13%	22.39%	4.48%	0.00%
3.	3.37	Transitions smoothly and efficiently to activities	64.18%	19.40%	5.97%	10.45%
4.	3.03	Collaborates with other students during student-centered activities	47.76%	26.87%	5.97%	19.40%
5.	3.76	Knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences	76.12%	23.88%	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.50</b>						

G. Digital Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	2.27	Uses digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	23.88%	17.91%	19.40%	38.81%
2.	1.97	Uses digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	22.39%	10.45%	8.96%	58.21%
3.	2.19	Uses digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning	22.39%	22.39%	7.46%	47.76%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.14</b>						

## Findings

### Improvement Priority

Develop and implement a process to ensure that all staff working in a position directly connected with instruction are trained in the interpretation and use of data in order to make informed decisions about student needs that strongly support the instructional priorities in the classroom.

(Indicator 3.2, Indicator 3.3, Indicator 3.10, Indicator 5.3, SP4. Equity of Learning)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 5.3

#### Evidence and Rationale

Interviews with principals, teachers, and teaching assistants revealed that instructional assistants do not receive professional development in the interpretation and use of data. Observations in the classrooms confirmed the high level of involvement teaching assistants have with the instruction of students either in small group or 1:1 situations. The system professional learning plans indicated that there were no planned training opportunities for teaching assistants. In the Accreditation Report, the system acknowledged this was an area that needed improvement. One teaching assistant stated: "I had some training when I first started 18 years ago, but nothing really since. Now I just do what the teacher tells me to do."

# Leadership Capacity

The capacity of leadership to ensure an institution's progress towards its stated objectives is an essential element of organizational effectiveness. An institution's leadership capacity includes the fidelity and commitment to its institutional purpose and direction, the effectiveness of governance and leadership to enable the institution to realize its stated objectives, the ability to engage and involve stakeholders in meaningful and productive ways, and the capacity to enact strategies to improve results of student learning.

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

AdvancED has found through its evaluation of best practices in more than 32,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution commits to a shared purpose and direction and establishes expectations for student learning that are aligned with the institutions' vision and supported by internal and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and overall institution effectiveness.

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

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

## Standard 1 - Purpose and Direction

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
1.1	The system engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a system-wide purpose for student success.	3.00	2.62
1.2	The system ensures that each school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	3.00	2.63
1.3	The school leadership and staff at all levels of the system commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning and supports challenging, equitable educational programs and learning experiences for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills.	3.67	2.89
1.4	Leadership at all levels of the system implement a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	3.00	2.61

## Standard 2 - Governance and Leadership

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools.	3.33	2.95
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	3.67	2.92
2.3	The governing body ensures that the leadership at all levels has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.	3.33	3.12
2.4	Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction.	3.67	2.97
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction.	3.00	2.67

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice in all areas of the system and improved student success.	3.00	2.76

## Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic

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

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

Evaluative Criteria	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
Questionnaire Administration	4.00	3.36
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	3.00	3.04

## Findings

### Opportunity For Improvement

Develop and implement a comprehensive stakeholder plan to build stakeholder capacity for involvement in service and leadership roles. In addition, measure and evaluate the effectiveness of each strategy employed in the plan and clearly communicate the urgency of stakeholder involvement and empowerment by setting specific targets and goals for stakeholder participation, thus establishing a basis for long term, data-driven collaboration and improvement in the stakeholder involvement process.

(Indicator 2.5, SF1. Questionnaire Administration)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 2.5

#### Evidence and Rationale

The Accreditation Report and system documentation confirmed the variety of communication media that were effectively used by the system and schools to keep stakeholders well-informed. However, findings of the External Review Team were consistent with the system's Accreditation Report: "a need for stakeholders to be more involved in the decision-making process." Survey data and analysis by system personnel in particular,

indicated a segment of the population that was yet to become engaged in the education of their children. Parents stated, “Parents are not eager to sign up for formal committees. They trust the leadership of the district and schools.” The board members noted the challenge to get people to work in the system “. . . to maintain the environment (culture) that we’ve built.”

The superintendent shared his perspective on the willingness of stakeholders to take leadership roles: “Parents may not have the ability (time, resources or expertise) to take on roles... It takes attitude, time and commitment to foster this continuing education idea.” However, community leaders stated that “. . . the culture (of our community and system) leaves you with a sense of duty; the expectation is that you give back.” A school administrator stated: “It is a blessing and a curse that our students know each other from the diaper to the diploma... There are so many opportunities to involve parents.” The strength of the above characteristics highlighted the challenges for this high performing school system.

Finally, in discussions with stakeholders concerning the potentials for incoming business and industry, the Team noted a statement that was accompanied by the nodding of heads, “. . . the culture that is already here will educate those people coming in.” The Team agreed with the essence of this statement, finally concluding that, without a comprehensive plan to maintain and strengthen the highly valued and effective culture of the system, stakeholder interests and abilities in supporting the schools might remain untapped or even wane as the population shifts.

Stakeholder engagement in the education of students was a key factor maintaining and improving all factors that serve to enhance student performance. Because of the intense sense of community; strong support by stakeholders for students, school, and system; and the existing high levels of involvement of a significant segment of the stakeholder population, involvement of those “yet to be involved” would require precise strategy but will serve to better support the high performance of all subgroups of students.

### **Powerful Practice**

The actions of the Spartanburg County School System Four Board of Trustees empowered the leadership of the system to freely operate in the best interests of all students promoting a culture of excellence and high performance for all aspects and personnel of the system.

(Indicator 2.2, Indicator 4.3, Indicator 4.4)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 2.2

#### Evidence and Rationale

Interviews with the board members, community representatives, parents, staff and students supported the finding that a culture of excellence and high expectations was established and maintained throughout the organization. Board members voiced the expectations of stakeholders that students and staff members are to do their best at all times.

Board members interviewed by the Team were proud of the fact that their professional training empowered

them to function effectively as board members, stating that their role was not to get into the day-to-day operations of the system but to make certain that guidance and resources were available for instructional support and operation of the system. The success of this role was evidenced by the most recent audit report which reflected a fund balance of over 8 million dollars. “We will always do what is best for all of our students and continue to ensure all of our students get a great education,” stated one board member who went on to say, “We have poverty of sixty per cent, but our students perform better than the (more affluent) systems.”

The leadership team of the system explained that financial stewardship was a priority for the system guided by policies enacted by the board. All Invoices were reviewed by more than one individual and signed by the superintendent. Additionally, supplies were ordered in bulk during the summer. The system recently earned an award from the South Carolina Budget and Control Board for reducing its consumption of energy through careful monitoring and attention to procedure. The system was also proactive in the maintenance and care of its facilities all of which were mature, but well maintained, clean and up-to-date. These facilities were evidence of commendable stewardship and the use of \$600,000.00 generated annually for capital improvements.

A young community member confirmed the results of board and system leadership in establishing and maintaining the culture of high performance and expectations: “I went to college and was exceptionally prepared by the system because we were expected to excel. There were students in my college classes who paid more money to go to high school than I paid for (college) tuition. I out-performed them all.”

The culture of high expectations and performance was maintained by the responsible and effective governance of the board and their actions that ensured that students, teachers and schools had the resources and support to provide a top-quality education “to impact and empower students for the future” (from the system Purpose statement).

### **Powerful Practice**

The school board, system and school leadership and staff demonstrated shared values and commitment that permeated all aspects of the system thereby, creating beliefs about teaching and learning which fostered high standards from the system level to the classrooms.

(Indicator 1.3, Indicator 2.4, Indicator 3.5, Indicator 3.7)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 1.3

#### Evidence and Rationale

The leadership teams at the school and system levels communicated a belief about teaching and learning that was evident from the high quality instruction in the classrooms. Collaboration between students and teachers validated the strong systemic belief and commitment to high quality teaching and learning. These beliefs were shared by and with stakeholders through a variety of avenues including posted mission statements at the school and system levels, flyers, websites, student handbooks, staff handbooks, newsletters, the system newspaper “Visions 4,” school calendars and other forms of formal and informal communication. One powerful communication strategy was face-to-face and ongoing communication in a “family-like” environment. The

system and school staff created a way to make communication happen wherever they gather.

While interviews with administrators, teachers, board members and parents demonstrated a clear understanding of the system's purpose, the system also employed a Quality Assurance Review that ensured alignment of the purpose and direction throughout the system. Survey data from stakeholders confirmed the culture of high standards and expectations that was intentionally infused throughout the system. Students articulated how their performance data from their personal data books was used to discuss and focus progress toward their yearly goals. System strategic plans and school renewal plans were guided by the system's purpose and direction and the strong beliefs of stakeholders about teaching and learning, focusing on what is best for every child.

# Resource Utilization

The use and distribution of resources must be aligned and supportive of the needs of an institution and the students served. Institutions must ensure that resources are aligned with the stated mission and are distributed equitably so that the needs of students are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes an examination of the allocation and use of resources, the equity of resource distribution to need, the ability of the institution to ensure appropriate levels of funding and sustainability of resources, as well as evidence of long-range capital and resource planning effectiveness.

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

AdvancED has found through its own evaluation of best practices in the more than 32,000 institutions in the AdvancED Network that a successful institution has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, meets special needs, and complies with applicable regulations. The institution employs and allocates staff members who are well qualified for their assignments. The institution provides a safe learning environment for students and staff. The institution provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff members to improve their effectiveness and ensures compliance with applicable governmental regulations.

## Standard 4 - Resources and Support Systems

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.1	The system engages in a systematic process to recruit, employ, and retain a sufficient number of qualified professional and support staff to fulfill their roles and responsibilities and support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, and educational programs.	3.00	2.92
4.2	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, educational programs, and system operations.	3.17	2.93
4.3	The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	3.67	3.05
4.4	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system.	3.00	2.63

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.5	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system.	3.00	2.74
4.6	The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	3.17	2.54
4.7	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of support systems to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	3.00	2.66
4.8	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.	3.17	2.60

## Findings

### Powerful Practice

The system demonstrated exemplary stewardship in the maintenance of its facilities and in the assurance of safety for all students and staff.

(Indicator 4.3, Indicator 4.6)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 4.3

#### Evidence and Rationale

As expressed repeatedly by the superintendent, School Resource Officer, facilities supervisor, and other stakeholders, "Safety is the number one priority." System actions strongly supported this statement. The Team found that the system implemented and monitored a School Crisis Management Plan for which training was provided yearly to all faculty and staff. Two School Resource Officers (SROs) provided continuous monitoring and support at all of the schools, including directing morning and afternoon traffic. The securing of the facilities included digital cameras, keyless entries, and Department of Social Services and State Law Enforcement identification checks for all visitors.

The head SRO emphasized the system's relationship with law enforcement. "I try to keep a hand on the students because without that, we won't have a hand on the future." The superintendent also ensured an environment conducive to learning. "No one has a right to take away someone else's right to learn." Discipline guidelines were strictly adhered to and easily met by students and all stakeholders.

The well-maintained facilities corroborated the facilities manager sentiment: "Our focus is to be good stewards and care for what we have." Maintenance projects were established yearly at the district and school levels and supported by the system Bond Anticipation Note (a short term security in advance of a larger bond issue to generate funds for upcoming projects) and the system energy conservation efforts which held students and

employees responsible for managing energy and other costs. The Team observed the conscious efforts of students and teachers in the classrooms to turn lights and equipment off when not in use. Documentation provided by the system provided a detailed view of the highly effective reporting, request and subsequent maintenance of equipment, buildings and facilities. Buildings across the system were not new but clearly displayed evidence of effective, preventive and regular maintenance and updates.

Purchasing of supplies is also a process that is carefully managed through a check and balance system. "We review every purchase order... The purchase requests must be verified to ensure that they are aligned with the purpose."

Quality stewardship of system and school resources: supports the purpose and culture of the system; reaps financial benefits; maintains supportive learning environments for students; and provides for the future through savings and reliability of all facilities and equipment.

# Conclusion

The following is a discussion of the themes and trends related to student success and organization effectiveness that were considered during the Review.

## Culture

The school board, system and school leadership and staff demonstrated shared values and commitment that permeated all aspects of the system thereby creating beliefs about teaching and learning which fostered high standards from the system level to the classrooms. The system, guided by the formal Purpose statement, was intensely focused on student success and aligned all practices, programs, initiatives and goals with the Purpose. Students across the system benefited from the highly developed culture of respect, learning and expectations that has been deliberately established and systemically supported by system leaders and classroom educators. All stakeholders affirmed: "We expect high quality and success."

## Governance

The Spartanburg County School System Four Board of Trustees empowered the leadership of the system to freely operate in the best interests of all students promoting a culture of excellence and high performance for all aspects and personnel. Board members and stakeholders demanded that students and adults do their best at all times. The board training enabled them to function effectively as board members to make certain that guidance and resources were available for instructional support and operation of the system

## Buildings and Facilities

The system demonstrated exemplary stewardship in the maintenance of its facilities and in the assurance of safety for all students and staff. "Our focus is to be good stewards and care for what we have." A highly effective maintenance and renewal process for equipment, buildings and safety strongly supported the high quality of student learning. The system implemented and monitored a School Crisis Management Plan for which training was provided yearly to all faculty and staff. A highly effective maintenance and renewal process for equipment, buildings and safety strongly supported the high quality of student learning.

## Technology Integration

One area cited by nearly every stakeholder group as needing improvement was technology. The Team observed that technology was being used in such a way as to enhance learning and was not frivolous or used simply for the sake of using technology. The deliberate, thoughtful infusion of technology into the classrooms and learning environments resulted in very effective uses and practices. The Team noted that technology integration could be driven by the Purpose of the system to support differentiated instruction, application of knowledge, higher order thinking skills and increased student engagement in learning processes. Ironically, during a number of classroom observations, applications and technologies froze or shut down causing students and teachers to restart or switch to another mode of learning and instruction. An 8th grade student

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summed it up as: "We don't really need more technology. We just need the things we have to work."

### Strength of the Teaching Force

The system exhibited its commitment to the community and to the high quality education of students through the systematic process to recruit and retain highly qualified professionals in the classrooms. Teachers worked in strong collaborative communities to analyze data and guide instructional decision making in the classrooms. This practice supported ongoing training in evaluation and use of data to improve student performance. Examples of high quality classroom instruction existed across the system that served as models for improvement. All students had access to the teacher, discussions, activities and support for their learning needs,

### Stakeholder Involvement

The Team agreed with the findings of the system that stakeholders should be provided with increased appropriate opportunities to serve in leadership and service/support roles. The development and implementation of a plan to build stakeholder capacity and involvement and to measure the effectiveness of involvement strategies would help to enhance the participation of those not already involved in the education of their children.

### Classroom Support Personnel

Currently instructional assistants do not receive professional development in the interpretation and use of data. The system should develop and implement a process to ensure that all staff working in a position directly connected with instruction are trained in the interpretation and use of data in order to make informed decisions about student needs to strongly support the instructional priorities in the classroom.

This report provided "Improvement Priorities" which the External Review Team determined to be next steps in improvement of school and student performance. "Powerful Practices" and "Opportunities for Improvement" provide additional support and guidance toward meeting the Powerful Practices. These "Actions" do not stand alone, but are inter-related to the Opportunities and build on the Powerful Practices in the sense that strengths and improvement in one area support growth in the others, thus empowering the systemic operations supporting continual improvement in student performance.

The system achieved state and national recognition for their levels of student performance. Maintaining and improving this level required diligence, focus and unity of purpose, strengthening those factors that drove this performance, clearly identifying factors that need to improve and taking effective measures to meet those challenges. Engaging reluctant stakeholders was a challenge that as it directly affected the support and learning of a group of students in need. Providing training for all classroom personnel in the analysis, interpretation and use of data would empower all classroom personnel to more effectively identify and meet the needs of all students, especially those lacking in support from home.

## **Improvement Priorities**

The institution should use the findings from this review to guide the continuous improvement process. The institution must address the Improvement Priorities listed below:

- Develop and implement a process to ensure that all staff working in a position directly connected with instruction are trained in the interpretation and use of data in order to make informed decisions about student needs that strongly support the instructional priorities in the classroom.

# Accreditation Recommendation

## Index of Education Quality

The Index of Education Quality (IEQ™) provides a holistic measure of overall performance based on a comprehensive set of indicators and evaluative criteria. A formative tool for improvement, it identifies areas of success as well as areas in need of focus.

The IEQ™ comprises three domains: 1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; 2) the leadership capacity to govern; and 3) the use of resources and data to support and optimize learning.

The overall and domain scores can range from 100-400. The domain scores are derived from: the AdvancED Standards and indicators ratings; results of the Analysis of Student Performance; and data from Stakeholder Feedback Surveys (students, parents, and staff).

	External Review IEQ Score	AdvancED Network Average
Overall Score	321.95	278.34
Teaching and Learning Impact	319.84	268.94
Leadership Capacity	330.56	292.64
Resource Utilization	314.58	283.23

The IEQ™ results include information about how the institution is performing compared to expected criteria as well as to other institutions in the AdvancED Network. The institution should use the information in this report, including the corresponding performance rubrics, to identify specific areas of improvement.

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

# Addenda

## Individual Institution Results (Self-reported)

Institution Name	Teaching and Learning Impact	Leadership Capacity	Resource Utilization	Overall IEQ Score
Woodruff Elementary School	371.43	400.00	328.57	371.79
Woodruff High School	342.86	345.45	328.57	341.03
Woodruff Middle School	300.00	309.09	328.57	307.69
Woodruff Primary School	361.90	363.64	300.00	351.28

## Team Roster

Member	Brief Biography
Dr. Drew Moore	Drew Moore began his teaching career as an elementary music teacher in Shreveport, Louisiana. In 1978 he moved to the Middle Laboratory School at Northwestern State University adding multiple subjects to his teaching repertoire and began working in accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) which accredited his school. Professional experiences include public school education, media director at a residential high school for the gifted in math, science, and performing arts; instructor for the local university and university laboratory school administrator. Retired after thirty-three years in public and higher education, he now chairs and serves as Team Member on External Review Teams at the school, district, distance learning, and corporate levels. Drew also serves on the Louisiana State AdvancED/SACS committee and the AdvancED Accreditation Commission. Degrees include: Bachelor of Music Education, Master's in Music, Specialist Degree in Public School Administration and Doctorate in Education Technologies from Northwestern State University in Louisiana and additional graduate work at Memphis State University in Tennessee and Louisiana State University- Shreveport.
Mr. Gregory W Watchinski	Greg Watchinski's career in education began in 1997 in Indian Prairie School District 204 in Naperville, Illinois teaching 2nd grade. A classroom teacher for eight years, he taught second grade for four years, third grade for two years, and fifth grade for two years. During that time, Greg attended Northern Illinois University and earned two Master's Degrees, the first in Curriculum and Instruction and the second in Education Administration. In 2005, he was hired for his first administrative job (Student Services Coordinator) and served in that capacity for two years. In 2007, Greg moved to South Carolina and was hired as Assistant Principal at Carolina Springs Elementary in Lexington District One. He served in that role for five years, before being named Principal at Carolina Springs Elementary to begin the 2012-2013 school year. Greg has worked with AdvancEd since 2008 and has served on many teams in a variety of places.
Dr. Kathryn B. Wood	Dr. Wood has her PhD in Education Policy Studies, a Masters in Administration and Supervision, and M.Ed in Secondary Guidance and Counseling. Her undergraduate studies are in Biology and Secondary Education. Dr. Wood's career in education has spanned 40 years, beginning in Montgomery County and Prince George's County Maryland and ending in the Archdiocese of Atlanta Catholic School system. Her career path included teacher, department chair, Assistant Principal, Dean of Students and Principal. In 2011, Dr. Wood was named Principal of the Year for the Archdiocese of Atlanta and NCEA Principal of the Year. In addition, in the Fall of 2011 she was named NAESP Principal of the Year. Dr. Wood has had published articles in "Momentum" and "Today's Catholic Teacher". She has also been a speaker at TELC and the NCEA National Convention. Dr. Wood retired in 2012, and currently serves as a Lead Evaluator for AdvancED and as a consultant to Catholic Schools. She also serves on the NCEA Leadership Advisory Council and the Reach for Excellence board.
Ms. Suzanne Cottrell	Ms. Cottrell's credentials include a BA in English and History, an M.Ed. in school counseling, an ESL endorsement, and an Administrative/Supervisory Certificate. Suzanne taught high school language arts and history for 15 years. She has worked as Small Learning Communities project director, secondary mentoring and induction coordinator, professional development coordinator, educator evaluation coordinator, and currently serves as Assessment Supervisor in Davis School District in Utah. She also serves on the Utah Public Educator Evaluation Committee. This is Suzanne's 28th year as an educator and her fourth year as an external review team member for AdvancED.

Member	Brief Biography
Dr. Gwendolyn E Harris	Gwendolyn Harris began her career at Scott's Branch High School in Summerton, South Carolina, where she taught science, psychology and physical education. She now serves as principal there. She also worked in Clarendon District Two as a classroom teacher for 15 years and an elementary principal for four years. She received a Master of Education from South Carolina State University and a Doctor of Education from Nova South Eastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.
Dr. Lorraine Peeples	Lorraine Peeples is a native of Norway, SC. A graduate of Claflin University, she has worked in the field of education for over 20 years. She currently serves as the principal of Denmark Olar Elementary. Prior to becoming a principal, she served as a teacher, assistant principal, teacher specialist, and instructional coach. She has also served on an external review team.
Dr. Rose H Wilder	Rose Wilder began her teaching career as an elementary reading teacher in Eutawville, South Carolina. She also taught at the primary and elementary levels. After eight years of teaching, she became an assistant principal and was promoted to principal after three years. Rose's work as a principal did not go unnoticed. She was an award winning principal. After four successful years as a principal, Rose was appointed assistant superintendent for instruction. She served in this capacity for one year, and was appointed superintendent. Rose was selected as State Superintendent of The Year for 2014. This school term, 2015-2016, marks 21 years for Rose as superintendent.

## Next Steps

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

## About AdvancED

AdvancED is the world leader in providing improvement and accreditation services to education providers of all types in their pursuit of excellence in serving students. AdvancED serves as a trusted partner to more than 32,000 public and private schools and school systems – enrolling more than 20 million students - across the United States and 70 countries.

In 2006, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), both founded in 1895, and the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) came together to form AdvancED: one strong, unified organization dedicated to education quality. In 2011, the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC) that was founded in 1917 became part of AdvancED.

Today, NCA CASI, NWAC and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED. The Accreditation Divisions of AdvancED share research-based quality standards that cross school system, state, regional, national, and international boundaries. Accompanying these standards is a unified and consistent process designed to engage educational institutions in continuous improvement.

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