

Report of the  
External Review  
for  
Lee County School District

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Fort Myers, FL, 33966-1012  
US

Dr. Nancy Graham, Superintendent

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## Introduction to the External Review

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 specified for their institution, demonstrate high levels of student performance or improvement of student performance if applicable, and provide evidence of stakeholder satisfaction with the operation of the institution. The accreditation standards focus on conditions and processes within a system that impact student performance and organizational effectiveness. The power of AdvancED Performance Accreditation lies in the connections and linkages between and among the standards, student performance, and stakeholder feedback.

Institutions participate in an External Review by a team of highly qualified evaluators who examine the institution's adherence and commitment to the accreditation criteria. The External Review is the hallmark of AdvancED Performance Accreditation as it energizes and equips the leadership and stakeholders of an institution 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 examination of evidence and relevant data, interviews with stakeholders, and observations of instruction, learning, and operations.

The AdvancED External Review Team used the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators and related criteria to guide its evaluation, looking not only for adherence to standards but also for how the institution functioned as a whole and embodied the practices and characteristics of quality.

Using the evidence at their disposal, the AdvancED External Review Team arrived at a set of findings contained in this report. The report is presented in three sections: Findings, Conclusion, and Addenda.

## Part I: Findings

The Findings section presents the External Review Team's evaluation of the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators. It includes Powerful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement identified by the External Review Team, as well as observations about Student Performance, the Learning Environment, and Stakeholder Feedback.

### Accreditation Standards and Indicators

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's Standards for Quality were developed by a committee comprised of effective 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 ensure excellence and continuous improvement. Before implementation, the standards were reviewed by internationally recognized experts in testing and measurement, teacher quality, and education research.

This section contains an evaluation of each of AdvancED's Accreditation Standards and Indicators, identification of Powerful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement related to each of the standards (if appropriate), and a description of the evidence examined by the External Review Team.

The AdvancED Standards and Indicators are the first of three primary areas of evaluation for AdvancED's Performance Accreditation model. Using indicator-specific performance levels, the External Review Team evaluates the degree to which the institution meets each indicator on a scale of 1 to 4. The scores assigned to the indicators are averaged to arrive at a single score. This score, along with scores from evaluations of student performance and stakeholder feedback, will be used to determine the accreditation status of the institution.

Average Indicator Score for this Institution	2.63
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**Standard 1: 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.**

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 30,000 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.

Standard 1			
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		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
1.1	The system engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a system-wide purpose for student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• District purpose statements - past and present</li> <li>• Documentation or description of the process for creating the district's purpose including the role of stakeholders</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Minutes from meetings related to development of the district's purpose and direction</li> <li>• Copy of strategic plan referencing the district purpose and direction and its effectiveness</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> </ul>	3.0
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of school purpose statements if different from the district purpose statement</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Examples of schools' continuous improvement plans</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Professional development plans and implementation timelines on topics related to equity, organizational effectiveness, and improved instruction and programs</li> <li>• Statements of shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning</li> <li>• The district strategic plan</li> </ul>	3.0
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Examples of schools continuous improvement plans</li> <li>• Professional development plans and implementation timelines on topics related to equity, organizational effectiveness, and improved instruction and programs</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• The district strategic plan</li> </ul>	3.0

**Opportunities for Improvement****Indicator**

1. Review, revise, and communicate a system-wide, comprehensive purpose for student success.

1.1

Interviews with school and central office staff confirmed that the school system's vision and mission statements were originally developed as part of the Strategic Plan and have not been actively reviewed in a number of years. The vision and mission is prominently displayed on the system website, on letterhead, and throughout the central office and school sites. A review of the vision and mission began when the current superintendent joined the system; however, the process did not involve all stakeholders. This recent review asked staff to provide their interpretation of the current vision statement: "To become a world-class school system." The review resulted in a definition of world-class that is now an addendum to the original vision statement. Interviews with administrators revealed that a comprehensive and inclusive process to review the vision and mission was "put on hold" until after the accreditation review.

The involvement of all stakeholder groups in reviewing and revising the system purpose will promote "buy-in" and will assist with system-wide communication of the purpose. Representative stakeholders may then serve as ambassadors in communicating the system purpose to stakeholders throughout the district.

2. Design and implement a procedure that ensures each school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success to all stakeholders.

1.2

Through observations, interviews, and review of artifacts the External Review Team determined that some schools have developed a school purpose for student success. School vision and mission statements were posted throughout the buildings, on school letterheads, school websites, and newsletters. Additionally, many schools were observed to have classroom vision and mission statements. It was unclear; however, as to the process to review, revise, and communicate the school purpose for student success. The External Review Team did not find evidence of a process whereby the system required each school to develop a school purpose for student success. Furthermore, it was not clear that each school's purpose for student success was directly aligned with the district purpose.



**Standard 2: The system operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and system 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 2			
The system operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and system effectiveness.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Professional development plans</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• District operations manuals</li> </ul>	1.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proof of legal counsel</li> <li>• Assurances, certifications</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Governing authority policies on roles and responsibilities, Florida Statute 112.3142 requiring code of ethics training for school board members, list of assigned staff for compliance, historical compliance data</li> </ul>	1.0
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District strategic plan</li> <li>• Examples of school improvement plans</li> <li>• Roles and responsibilities of school leadership</li> <li>• Roles and responsibilities of district leadership</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Survey results regarding functions of the governing authority and operations of the district</li> </ul>	1.0
2.4	Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development offerings and plans</li> <li>• Examples of collaboration and shared leadership</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Examples of improvement efforts and innovations in the educational programs</li> <li>• Examples of decisions aligned with the district's purpose and direction</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> </ul>	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Copies of surveys or screen shots from online surveys</li> <li>• Survey responses</li> <li>• Observations</li> </ul>	3.0
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice in all areas of the system and improved student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Governing body policy on supervision and evaluation</li> <li>• Job specific criteria</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Representative supervision and evaluation reports</li> </ul>	3.0

**Standard 3: The system's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning across all grades and courses.**

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 to 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.

Standard 3
The system's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning across all grades and courses.

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning expectations for different courses and programs</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Course, program, or school schedules</li> <li>• Student work across courses or programs</li> <li>• Survey results</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Posted learning objectives</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Descriptions of instructional techniques</li> </ul>	3.0
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum guides</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Common assessments</li> <li>• Surveys results</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Program descriptions</li> <li>• Products – scope and sequence, curriculum maps</li> </ul>	3.0
3.3	Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authentic assessments</li> <li>• Examples of teacher use of technology as an instructional resource</li> <li>• Examples of student use of technology as a learning tool</li> <li>• Student work demonstrating the application of knowledge</li> <li>• Examples of professional development offerings and plans tied specifically to the approved or prescribed instructional strategies and programs</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Observations</li> </ul>	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.4	System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum maps</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Supervision and evaluation procedures</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Observations</li> </ul>	3.0
3.5	The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Professional development funding to promote professional learning communities</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Evidence of informal conversations that reflect collaboration about student learning</li> <li>• Examples of improvements to content and instructional practice resulting from collaboration</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> </ul>	3.0
3.6	Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Survey results</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> </ul>	3.0
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Descriptions and schedules of mentoring, coaching, and induction programs with references to district and school beliefs and values about teaching and learning</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Personnel manuals with information related to new hires including mentoring, coaching, and induction practices</li> </ul>	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Volunteer program with variety of options for participation</li> <li>• List of varied activities and communications modes with families, e.g., info portal, online, newsletters, parent centers, academic nights, open house, early release days</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	3.0
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Observations</li> </ul>	2.0
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Policies, processes, and procedures on grading and reporting</li> </ul>	2.0
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District quality control procedures showing implementation plan for professional development for district and school staff</li> <li>• District professional development plan involving the district and all schools</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	3.0
3.12	The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedules, lesson plans, or example student learning plans showing the implementation of learning support services</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Observations</li> </ul>	3.0

**Opportunities for Improvement****Indicator**

1. Develop, implement, and evaluate a child advocacy program individualized for each campus that ensures every student is known and mentored by at least one adult.

3.9

Interviews with system and building-level administrators and written evidence in the system's Self Assessment Report revealed that there is a need for a formal, system-wide, individual student advocacy program. In interviews, building-level staff frequently described counseling and/or advisory type programs that were in place; however, there was no system-wide plan for addressing this need nor for evaluating its effectiveness.

2. Design, implement, and evaluate system-wide grading and reporting practices that clearly define criteria representing attainment of content knowledge and skills across all grade levels and courses.

3.10

The system's Self Assessment Report stated that "Most teachers across the system use common grading and reporting policies, processes, and procedures based on criteria that represent each student's attainment of content knowledge and skills." Interviews and reviews of grading practice documentation revealed that the teachers adhere to common grading scales throughout the district. There was considerable variation; however, in how accurately the grades represented "...each student's attainment of content knowledge and skills." This variation was most noticeable at the secondary levels.



**Standard 4: The system has resources and provides services in all schools that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.**

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 30,000 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. The institution ensures compliance with applicable governmental regulations.

Standard 4			
The system has resources and provides services in all schools that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• District budgets or financial plans for the last three years</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Assessments of staffing needs</li> <li>• Documentation of highly qualified staff</li> <li>• Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement and retention of professional and support staff for the district and schools</li> </ul>	3.0
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Examples of school schedules</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Examples of school calendars</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• District strategic plan showing resources support for district</li> </ul>	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.3	The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Example systems for school maintenance requests</li> <li>• Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements</li> <li>• Policies, handbooks on district and school facilities and learning environments</li> <li>• Example maintenance schedules for schools</li> </ul>	3.0
4.4	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District strategic plan showing the areas of budget, facilities, quality control, and other strategic systems</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Policies, handbooks on district and school facilities and learning environments</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Observations</li> </ul>	3.0
4.5	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Evaluation procedures and results of education resources</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> </ul>	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.6	The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies relative to technology use at the district-level and school-level</li> <li>• District technology plan and budget to improve technology services and infrastructure for the district-level and school-level</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Brief description of learning management systems or data management systems that support the effective use of student assessment results, school effectiveness, and district effectiveness</li> <li>• Observations</li> </ul>	3.0
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> </ul>	3.0
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of services available related to counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Description of IEP process</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Description of referral process</li> </ul>	2.0

**Opportunities for Improvement****Indicator**

1. Refine the process for recruitment, placement, and retention of a qualified professional and support staff to ensure that district and individual school personnel reflect the diversity of the student population being served.

4.1

The Superintendent's system overview presentation clearly identified the need for a more robust approach in recruiting and retaining a workforce that mirrors the school system's diverse student population. System staff acknowledged in both the Self Assessment Report and in the Standards presentation a need to "...recruit, hire, and retain teachers representative of the student population." The Human Resources Section of the Strategic Plan Update has already been modified to include three measurable objectives to meet this goal.

Based on multiple interviews, the primary reasons for attrition in the non-retirement age teaching ranks included more attractive salary schedules in some neighboring counties, and the desire of some of the younger teachers recruited from areas outside of Ft. Myers to return to their homes after a working locally for a few years. In a recent newspaper article (News-Press, Cape Coral/Ft. Myers, March 2, 2014) the "challenges with recruiting teachers ...and local numbers match those nationally that show teachers leave the profession after about five years." The fact that the teacher attrition rate is the result of both local factors and also part of a nation-wide trend supports the need for the system to develop new and innovative ways to address the overall attrition problem while increasing diversity in the ranks.

The system is in the process of establishing a new set of hiring procedures known as hiring "The Lee County Way" to meet this challenge. While the goal of establishing a more diverse candidate pool is an important step, additional strategies should be instituted to facilitate staffing diversity at all levels of the organization.

**Standard 5: 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.**

Systems 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.

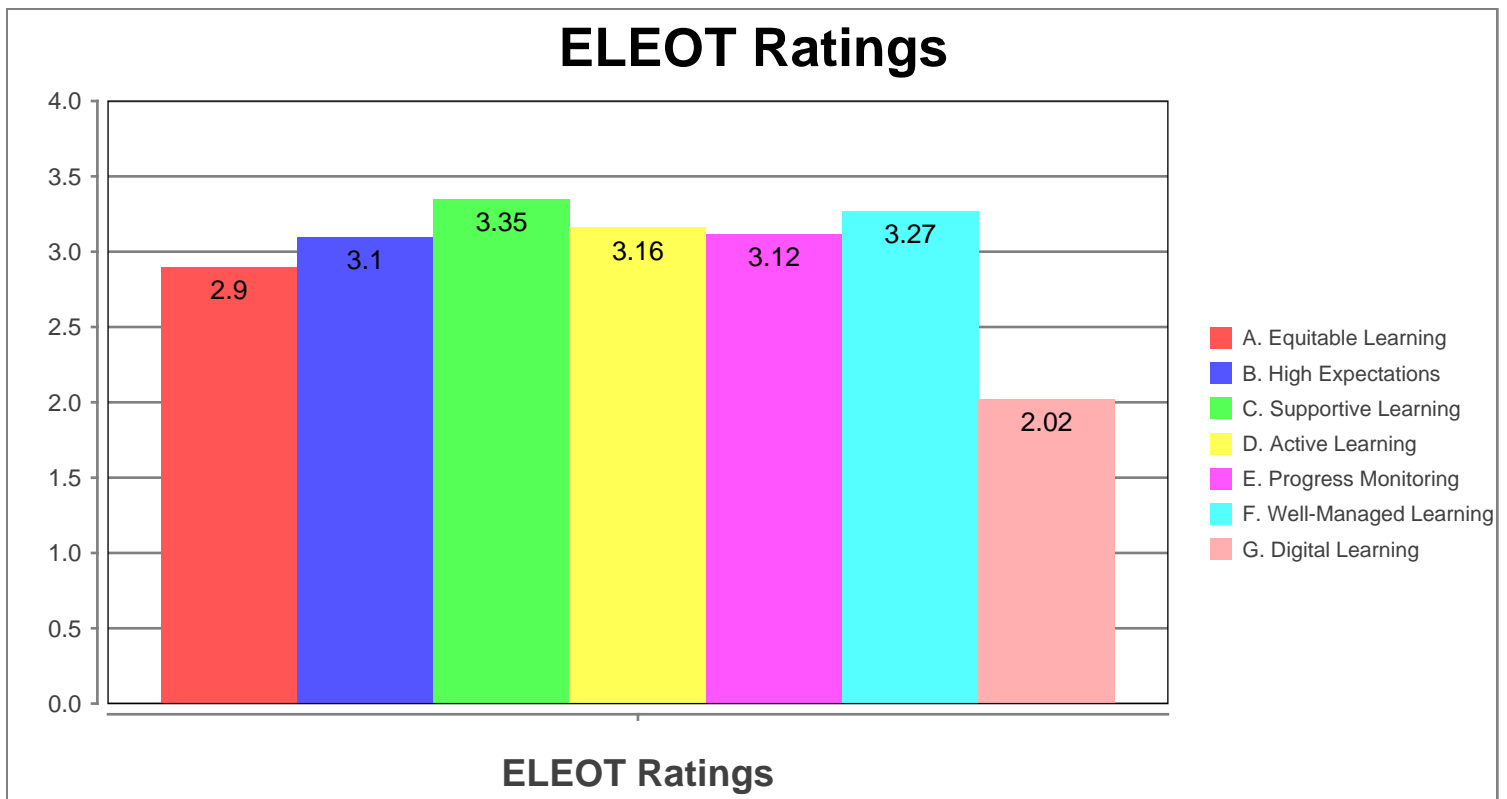
Standard 5			
The system implements a comprehensive assessment system that generates a range of data about student learning and system effectiveness and uses the results to guide continuous improvement.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.1	The system establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Brief description of student assessment system including range of data produced from standardized and local or school assessments on student learning and school performance</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> </ul>	2.0
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.3	Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Professional learning schedule specific to the use of data</li> <li>• Documentation of attendance and training related to data use</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Policies and written procedures specific to data training</li> </ul>	2.0
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Policies and procedures specific to data use and training</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Description of process for analyzing data to determine verifiable improvement in student learning</li> <li>• Examples of use of results to evaluate continuous improvement action plans</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Evidence of student growth</li> </ul>	3.0
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Examples of district marketing tools and websites that cite student achievement results or that make promises regarding student achievement</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	3.0

## Learning Environment

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. External Review Team members conduct multiple observations during the review process and provide ratings on 30 items based on a four-point scale. The following provides the aggregate average score across multiple observations for each of the seven learning environments included in ELEOT.



## Student Performance

Student Performance on assessments is the second of three primary areas of evaluation for AdvancED's Performance Accreditation model. Institutions are asked to collect and analyze student performance data, then submit the data and the analyses to the External Review Team for review. The External Review Team evaluates the quality of the assessments used by the institution, the degree to which the institution properly administered the assessments, analyzed and acted on the results, and the overall performance of students using a set of rubrics. Results of that evaluation are reported below.

Student Performance Evaluation	
Evaluative Criteria	Performance Level
Assessment Quality	3.0
Test Administration	4.0
Quality of Learning	3.0
Equity of Learning	3.0



## Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholder Feedback is the third of three primary areas of evaluation in AdvancED's Performance Accreditation model. The AdvancED surveys are directly correlated to the AdvancED Accreditation 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 and the degree to which the institution analyzed and acted on the results. Results of that evaluation are reported below.

Stakeholder Feedback Evaluation	
Evaluative Criteria	Performance Level
Questionnaire Administration	3.0
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	3.0

## Individual Institution Results

AdvancED requires internal and external stakeholders from each individual institution within the system to evaluate their institution on the AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools, student performance, and stakeholder feedback. The following table provides the results of those self-analyses. Higher scores indicate higher perceived performance on each of the measures. The range of possible scores for each of the institutions within the system are 1 (low performing) to 4 (high performing).

Institution	Indicator Averages	Questionnaire Administration	Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	Assessment Quality	Test Administration	Quality of Learning	Equity of Learning
ALC West	2.88	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	1.0
Allen Park Elementary School	3.07	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Bayshore Elementary	2.85	4.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Bonita Springs Elementary School	2.98	1.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Bonita Springs Middle School	3.03	1.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0
Buckingham Excep Student Center	3.29	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Caloosa Elementary School	3.09	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Caloosa Middle School	2.91	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Cape Coral High School	2.82	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Cape Coral Institute of Technology	3.0	1.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Cape Elementary	3.04	3.0	2.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Challenger Middle School	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Colonial Elementary School	2.44	1.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	2.0
Cypress Lake High School	2.94	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Cypress Lake Middle School	3.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Diplomat Elementary School	3.03	3.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Diplomat Middle School	3.06	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0

Institution	Indicator Averages	Questionnaire Administration	Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	Assessment Quality	Test Administration	Quality of Learning	Equity of Learning
Dr. Carrie D. Robinson Littleton Elementary	3.05	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0
Dunbar Community School	2.88	2.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0
Dunbar High School	3.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Early Childhood Learning Services	3.3	4.0	3.0				
East Lee County High School	2.85	3.0	3.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Edgewood Academy	2.95	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Edison Park Creative and Expressive Arts School	2.94	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0
Estero High School	2.91	4.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	2.0
Fort Myers Beach Elementary School	2.97	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0
Fort Myers High School	3.45	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0
Fort Myers Institute of Technology	3.12	2.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Fort Myers Middle Academy	2.82	1.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Franklin Park Magnet School	3.04	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0
G. Weaver Hipps Elementary	3.13	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	2.0
Gateway Elementary School	2.93	1.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Gulf Elementary School	2.98	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	2.0
Gulf Middle School	2.94	3.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	4.0
Hancock Creek Elementary School	3.13	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Harns Marsh Elementary School	3.05	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	2.0	2.0
Harns Marsh Middle School	2.67	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Hector Cafferata, Jr. Elementary School	2.88	3.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	1.0
Heights Elementary School	3.05	4.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.0

Institution	Indicator Averages	Questionnaire Administration	Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	Assessment Quality	Test Administration	Quality of Learning	Equity of Learning
Ida S. Baker High School	3.03	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Island Coast High	2.64	1.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
J. Colin English Elementary School	3.13	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	2.0	2.0
James Stephens International Academy	2.39	3.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Lee Adolescent Mother's Program	2.79	2.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Lee County ALC Central Middle/High	2.79	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Lee Virtual Instruction Program	2.97	3.0	4.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Lehigh Acres Middle School	2.79	2.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Lehigh Elementary School	2.91	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	2.0
Lehigh Senior High School	3.15	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Lexington Middle School	3.06	3.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Manatee Elementary	2.95	1.0	2.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Mariner High School	2.94	1.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	1.0
Mariner Middle School	3.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Mirror Lakes Elementary School	3.09	1.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
North Fort Myers Academy for the Arts	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
North Fort Myers High School	3.12	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	4.0
Oak Hammock Middle School	3.64	1.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Orange River Elementary School	3.04	1.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Orangewood Elementary School	2.95	1.0	4.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Patriot Elementary School	2.89	4.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Paul Laurence Dunbar Middle School	2.85	1.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	3.0

Institution	Indicator Averages	Questionnaire Administration	Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	Assessment Quality	Test Administration	Quality of Learning	Equity of Learning
Pelican Elementary School	2.93	1.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Pine Island Elementary School	3.12	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Pinewoods Elementary School	3.07	3.0	4.0	2.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Ray V. Pottorf Elementary School	3.09	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Rayma C. Page Elementary School	3.13	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
River Hall Elementary School	3.04	1.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0
Riverdale High School	3.12	3.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Royal Palm Exceptional School Center	3.0	1.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
San Carlos Park Elementary School	3.09	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Skyline Elementary School	3.02	1.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
South Fort Myers High School	2.97	1.0	2.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
Spring Creek Elementary School	3.02	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Sunshine Elementary School	3.27	4.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Tanglewood Elementary	3.07	4.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
The Alva School	2.27	4.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.0
The Sanibel School	3.06	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0
Three Oaks Elementary School	3.05	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Three Oaks Middle School	2.85	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Tice Elementary School	2.95	4.0	4.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0
Tortuga Preserve Elementary School	2.89	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	2.0	2.0
Trafalgar Elementary School	3.04	1.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	2.0
Trafalgar Middle School	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	4.0	3.0	3.0

Institution	Indicator Averages	Questionnaire Administration	Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	Assessment Quality	Test Administration	Quality of Learning	Equity of Learning
Treeline Elementary	2.91	1.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	2.0
Tropic Isles Elementary School	3.07	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	4.0
Varsity Lakes Middle School	2.58	1.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.0
Veterans Park Academy for the Arts	2.95	1.0	3.0	2.0	3.0	3.0	2.0
Villas Elementary School	2.85	4.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	3.0

### ***Other System Institutions***

The following institutions did not complete the required Accreditation Report for this External Review.

Institution	Institution
Adult and Community Education	Alva Middle School

## Part II: Conclusion

### *Summary of the External Review*

***In off-site and on-site review sessions, the AdvancED External Review Team examined artifacts and evidence provided by the institution. During the on-site portion of the review, the team reviewed additional artifacts, collected and analyzed data from interviews, and conducted observations.***

The External Review was conducted March 2-5, 2014. The system was very well prepared. The administration was open and honest in its self appraisal. All requested evidence was made available. It was clear from the interviews that all staff were involved in the self assessment process.

The review began on Sunday evening with an opportunity for the 16 member External Review Team to meet and interact with the Superintendent's Cabinet, the Board Chair and Vice-Chair, and members of the Lee Foundation. This meeting highlighted the partnership that exists with the Foundation and with community members. On Monday the Review Team conducted numerous scheduled interviews in the central office. The schedule was extremely well organized by system staff and was very inclusive in terms of persons selected to participate. On Tuesday the Review Team visited 16 schools and on Wednesday visits were made to two alternative schools. The oral exit report was delivered to a large audience of interested school system employees and community stakeholders.

The External Review Team conducted 503 interviews as follows:

- 168 Administrators
- 177 Teachers/Professional Staff
- 127 Students
- 031 Parents/Community Members

***Using the evidence collected, the team engaged in dialogue and deliberations concerning the degree to which the institution met the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators.***

The school system's administrative team received many favorable and unsolicited comments attesting to their positive influence on the overall school system. It was evident to the External Review Team that system and building-level leadership have supported the development of a culture that encourages innovation, collaboration, professional growth, and that focuses on student achievement. It was also evident that teachers and support staff have created classrooms that focus on the development of student learning skills, thinking skills, and life skills.

The Foundation for Lee County Public Schools is a notable community partner that is valued and recognized for its support of education throughout the district. This partnership has been forged over the years and is especially noteworthy because of the high degree of school system leadership turnover that has occurred over the past four years.

The five member School Board has struggled to work together in a cohesive manner. Three Required Actions were developed addressing Board governance issues. The system has experienced significant turnover in the superintendent's office in the past four years. The current superintendent was hired first on an interim basis and soon afterwards was made permanent; however, on a short-term contract. Leadership stability at the top is a significant need of the system.

School principals voiced a great deal of support for the current administration. They frequently cited the high degree of professional support they receive from the central office staff. The recently created department of School Development Executive Directors was cited by the principals as a "powerful way to develop more data-based decision-making."

The system is committed to continuous improvement. This was evident beginning with the Self Assessment Report. System-level leadership stated several times that they were looking forward to the accreditation review as they planned to incorporate the results into their Strategic Plan review and revision process.

The system identified a need to better coordinate its efforts on behalf of struggling students. A Required Action was developed to evaluate the effectiveness of the range of services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students, and then select or design and implement programs to address these needs. System staff at many levels also frequently used the phrase "We are data rich and analysis poor." A fifth Required Action was generated addressing the need to develop systematic data analysis processes and procedures. Such a process will provide a comprehensive picture of student learning, instruction, the effectiveness of programs, and the conditions that support learning, and may then inform all continuous improvement plans and activities.

***During the on-site review, members of the External Review Team evaluated the learning environment by observing classrooms and general operations of the institution. Using data from these observations, the team evaluated the quality of instruction and learning that took place classified around seven constructs or environments: equity, high expectations, support, engagement, progress monitoring and feedback, management, and use of technology.***

The External Review Team conducted 150 formal classroom observations in 18 schools using the Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (ELEOT). The most frequently observed learning environment practices provided students opportunities:

- for equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support;
- to engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable;
- to obtain support and assistance to understand content and accomplish tasks;
- for active engagement in the classroom learning activities;
- to improve their understanding of a lesson through responses to teacher feedback;
- to interact respectfully with teacher(s) and peers, and;
- to use digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning.

Many schools were observed to have highly functioning leadership teams, lead teachers, and coaches. It was evident that student success was the primary focus through the use of data walls (traditional and electronic) and



well implemented Professional Learning Communities at different grade levels. At several schools students made frequent use of personal response system devices ("clickers") that afforded multiple opportunities for participation and immediate feedback.

One parent commented on how "thrilled" she was with her child's success in a dual language course in elementary school. "Face-to-Face" meeting days between students and teachers in the Virtual School for the purpose of tutoring, socialization, and required oral quizzes were observed to be effective practices. One External Review Team Member commented "I saw dog-eared data charts of individual students on the desks of teachers in one elementary school which indicated to me that those teachers used their data for more than wall coverings."

Another External Review Team member noted "While observing classrooms in a middle school and a high school, I saw a package of technology in every teacher's classroom being used by teachers. I saw and heard of ample laptop carts in both schools, ample computers in the media centers, multiple computer labs, and every technology program had ample computers for their programs."

The least frequently observed learning environment practices included:

- the provision of differentiated learning opportunities and activities to adequately address student needs;
- being asked and responding to questions that require higher order thinking (e.g., applying, evaluating, synthesizing);
- the provision of additional/alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level of challenge;
- making connections from classroom content to real-life experiences;
- understanding how her/his work is assessed;
- collaborating with other students during student-centered activities, and;
- using digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning.

Because the ELEOT is based on the observation (or lack) of student-centered learning environments it is helpful to consider the results as providing a "snapshot" of classroom conditions. With that in mind the system is encouraged to examine and develop methods for increasing the use of differentiated learning opportunities and providing alternative instruction to selected students. Continued work on developing teacher skills in using higher order thinking questioning is suggested along with continued focus on moving from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction.

The Lee County School District is large with an enrollment of over 85,000 students attending 95 schools and programs (exclusive of charter schools). Students represent 159 countries and speak approximately 98 different languages. There are five foreign languages taught in the schools: American Sign Language, French, German, Latin and Spanish. The latest figures show more than 8,600 students identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP). There are approximately 11,000 students identified as Exceptional Student Education (ESE) recipients and of those, nearly 5,000 are academically gifted students. This diverse school system offers many options and individually tailored schools and programs to meet student needs.

The district staff is to be commended for its excellent preparation for the External Review. The schedule was extremely well-organized. All key staff in the central office and at the building-level were made available for

interviews. All staff appeared knowledgeable of the review process and appeared dedicated to the process of continuous improvement.

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 criteria. Beginning with school year, 2013-14, AdvancED is introducing a new framework to describe the result of an accreditation review. Consistent with the modern focus of accreditation on continuous improvement with an emphasis on student success, AdvancED introduces an innovative and state-of-the-art framework for diagnosing and revealing institutional performance called the Index of Education Quality (IEQ). The IEQ is comprised of three domains of performance: 1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; 2) the leadership capacity to govern; 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.

The three domains of performance are derived from the AdvancED Standards and Indicators; the Analysis of Student Performance; and the Engagement and Involvement of Stakeholders. Within each domain institutions will be able to 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 can be a valuable source of guidance for continuous improvement. Upon review of the findings in this report, institutional leaders should work with their staff to review and understand the evidence and rationale for each Required Action as well as the corresponding pathway to improvement described in the performance levels of the selected Indicator.

The IEQ provides a new framework that recognizes and supports the journey of continuous improvement. Your institution's IEQ is the starting point for continuous improvement. Your actions for improvement that have a positive impact will be reflected in your IEQ score.

IEQ Institutional Score: 271

Teaching and Learning Impact: 281  
(Standards 3 and 5; Student Performance Criteria)

Leadership Capacity: 242  
(Standards 1 and 2; Stakeholder Engagement Criteria)

Resource Utilization: 288  
(Standard 4)

The External Review team recommends that Lee County School District be accredited by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission for a five-year term of accreditation.

## Required Action

1. Design, implement, and regularly evaluate Board procedures that: 1) clearly support the system's purpose and direction; 2) have mechanisms for monitoring the conditions that support student learning, effective instruction, and assessment; 3) emphasize challenging learning experiences for all students; and 4) provides direction for professional growth of all staff.

Related Indicator or Assurance: 2.1

### Description:

Interviews with the governing board and a review of current board policies and board meeting minutes provided evidence that existing board policies do not include clearly defined roles for board members with respect to their procedures and policy implementation. The following School Board Philosophy statement (Policy 1.02) describes actions to support its purpose - improved student achievement.

"The School Board of Lee County governs with an emphasis on its well-defined purpose – improved student achievement. Therefore, the School Board shall:

- (1) Lead with vision by keeping the focus on the future rather than the past or present.
- (2) Empower through processes.
- (3) Encourage and listen for the diversity and the views of all in the community.
- (4) Lead strategically.
- (5) Create a clear distinction between School Board and administrative roles.
- (6) Make decisions based on factual information.
- (7) Make decisions collectively rather than individually.
- (8) Govern proactively rather than reactively."

This Philosophy Statement was adopted by the existing Board in 2007; however, there is no record of it being reviewed since then. There was no evidence offered in interviews or documents that clearly addresses items (2), (5), (7), and (8) in terms of procedures and practices. Through interviews with Board members, administrators, teachers, parents, and community members there was evidence that individual Board members are at times very involved in administrative functions. There was also evidence in Board meeting minutes that many decisions are not made collectively, and that some individual Board members often state their own points of view on the issues. There was also no evidence offered to support proactive governance by the Board. In summation, it appeared that the Board does not have cohesive and clear procedures for implementing its School Board Philosophy statements.

School Board Policy 1.07(3) ("Policy Development") states: "Delineate governance from administrative processes and procedures."

Interviews with board members, administrators, teachers, and parents indicated that there was no process or procedure that addressed this delineation of roles. The November 13, 2013 Lee County School Board's Organizational Planning Minutes stated that specific governing board members were starting to work on Board

Development and Board Officer roles and responsibilities for the Board Policies.

In individual interviews with the External Review Team, Board members were asked "What is the process and the protocol that is used by the Board if an individual Board member veers outside of their defined role and/or responsibility?" Multiple responses indicated that there was no specific procedure. Some described a practice of speaking individually and privately with the Board member involved. One Board member responded "We've been advised by our Board Attorney to not adopt any polices that are not specifically required by law and that could tie the hands of future boards." An important distinction is that this Required Action specifically addresses the need for procedures and actions and not development of new policies.

A review of Board Policies and interviews confirmed that some Board Policies are periodically reviewed to determine needed changes; however, there were no procedures as to how or when all policies are reviewed. Additionally, there were no procedures made available to the External Review Team describing implement of relevant Board policies.

The governing board's effective operation of the system and its schools will be improved when there are clearly defined procedures and practices that delineate the roles and responsibilities of the Board and its members.

2. Develop and implement board policies and procedures to evaluate its actions to ensure that they are in accordance with defined roles and responsibilities, include a formally adopted code of ethics, and describe a process of participation in a professional development program that addresses conflict resolution, decision-making, and supervision and evaluation.

Related Indicator or Assurance: 2.2

Description:

Currently the School Board does not participate in any type of systematic formal professional development training regarding the roles and responsibilities of the governing body and its individual members. Interviews with Board members confirmed that there is a need for formalized training as it relates to their roles and responsibilities. Several Board members indicated that they personally participated in professional development activities; however, this was an individual choice and not a defined responsibility. Additional interviews with other stakeholders validated that training in the areas of interpersonal relationships is a priority if this governing board is to work as an effective and efficient governing body.

Florida Statute 112.3142 requires school system board members to complete four hours of ethics training annually. Such training addresses code of ethics and laws governing public records and meetings. There was no written evidence presented to the team that the Board collectively or individually participated in ethics training as mandated by Florida Statute. Interviews indicated that some board members had participated in this training.

The AdvancED Accreditation Policies and Procedures for AdvancED Accreditation (Updated August 2013) includes a requirement for adherence to governmental regulations as follows:

"2.02 Additional Requirements. In addition to satisfying the conditions outlined in 2.01, a school/school system must adhere to the following:

a. Compliance with Applicable Governmental Requirements. The school/school system must comply with all applicable governmental requirements, including any requirements for governmental approval, recognition, or accreditation. A school's/school system's loss of its governmental approval, recognition, or accreditation may be grounds for an accreditation review and monitoring review that may result in a change in accreditation status in accordance with the procedures outlined in this document."

The references above to Florida statute and AdvancED policies are included here to support the necessity for the Board to develop and implement clear procedures for addressing defined roles and responsibilities.

Finally, expanding the professional development opportunities for all Board members will enhance their knowledge of policy development, procedures, laws, and regulations, and will create a framework for the governing board to operate responsibly and function as a cohesive unit.

3. Develop and implement Board procedures to consistently protect, support, and respect the autonomy of system and school leadership to accomplish goals for achievement and instruction, and to manage day-to-day operations of the system and its schools.

Related Indicator or Assurance: 2.3

Description:

Interviews with administrators and Board members revealed that Board members sometimes were involved in the day-to-day operations of the district. There were no Board written procedures defining Board roles and responsibilities in this area. There is a clear Board Policy (1.02) previously included in Required Action 2.1 that addresses this issue: "...Create a clear distinction between School Board and administrative roles."

A governing board that protects, supports, and respects the autonomy of system and school leadership, enhances the success and image of the school system, school leadership, and the governing board. It also validates that the governance board maintains a clear distinction between roles and responsibilities of the governing board and those of system and school leadership.

4. Review, revise, implement, and evaluate the range of services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students, and then select or design and implement programs to address these needs.

Related Indicator or Assurance: 4.8

Description:

The school system serves a diverse population of students representing 159 countries and speaking 98 different languages. Seventy percent of the system's students are eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch and some

individual school percentages exceed the 90% level. Additionally, 32 of the schools have been identified as "high need schools" requiring additional resource and support services currently being provided through the five-year, \$45 million Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant. In the Accreditation Report, the system cites the "multi-tiered approach ... (used to meet) this challenge by leveraging programs within the school, centralized resources from the district office, and partnerships with other governmental and community groups."

Interviews with leadership of The Foundation for Lee County Public Schools confirmed the strong partnership with the system that focuses its \$2 million annual budget on supporting schools with scholarships, grants and target initiatives. Food for Thought, the Harry Chapin Food Bank partnership, and "Dancing in the Classrooms" are some of the projects supported by The Foundation.

The Standards presentation, and follow-up interviews with central office personnel identified the need for "continuous improvement and evaluation of processes." Concurrently, the ratio of students to counselors (reported in the document titled School Counselors to Student Ratios) has increased over the state averages. In addition, certified media specialists have been replaced in some schools with para-professionals as finances are re-directed to meet increasing needs. These interviews substantiated that individual support personnel received performance evaluations; however, the programs themselves were not evaluated.

Although there was evidence provided via SharePoint substantiating the range of services provided, there was no evidence of measures of program effectiveness in place nor were there improvement plans designed, implemented, and evaluated for their efficacy in meeting student needs for either Indicators 4.7 or 4.8. Implementation and evaluation of specific targeted services and programs will ensure that ever-limited resources will be used most effectively.

5. Design, implement, and evaluate systematic data analysis processes and procedures that provide a comprehensive picture of student learning, instruction, the effectiveness of programs, and the conditions that support learning, and that directly inform all continuous improvement plans and activities.

Related Indicator or Assurance: 5.1

Description:

This Required Action also identifies issues described in the following Indicators:

- 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.
- 5.3) Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.

The system's Self Assessment Report minimally addressed this need as follows: "One area of opportunity is the development of a comprehensive student assessment system. While there are two programs in place, Pinnacle Gradebook and Performance Matters, the SDLC is committed to securing a program that adequately collects and delivers real-time data in the most effective and efficient manner. With the emphasis on data-based decision-making, this need has become a top priority and is currently under active review."

Interviews with system and school personnel confirmed the need for a comprehensive and systematic student assessment system. There are no processes to ensure consistent measurement across all classrooms, courses, educational programs and system divisions. Data sources mostly include student performance scores; however, there is no formal process for making comparisons within grade levels, between and among schools, or with other systems. Trend data that provides a comprehensive and complete picture of student learning, instruction, the effectiveness of programs and the conditions that support learning is neither clearly identified nor used in a coherent manner system-wide. A phrase heard frequently by the External Review Team was: "We are data rich and analysis poor."

Current assessment practices are not evaluated for effectiveness. There is no systematic, focused professional development process addressing the interpretation and utilization of data in the classroom. Multiple interviews revealed that there are no processes to ensure consistent measurement across all classrooms, courses, and educational programs. A comprehensive data analysis process will provide systemic information and direction to improve student learning outcomes, and will more effectively inform all continuous improvement activities.

## Part III: Addenda

### *The External Review Team*

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## **Next Steps**

The institution should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all 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. Develop action plans to address the Required Actions made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward addressing the Required Actions.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the institution's efforts to improve student performance and system effectiveness.
5. Following the External Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the Required Actions. Institutions are required to respond to all Required Actions. The Required Actions should be completed before the Accreditation Progress Report is submitted. 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 complete the Required Actions. The accreditation status will be reviewed and acted upon based on the completion of the Required Actions and the resulting improvement.
6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

## ***Celebrating Accreditation***

Following the External Review, the team submits the final report to AdvancED for review and for action by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission that confers accreditation upon the institution. Upon receiving its accreditation, the institution should share its achievement with internal and external communities.

## ***About AdvancED***

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 joined NCA CASI and SACS CASI as part of AdvancED. AdvancED is the world's largest education community, representing 30,000 public and private schools and systems across the United States and in 75 countries worldwide and educating 16 million students.

Today, NCA CASI, NWAC, and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED. Through AdvancED, these divisions share research-based accreditation standards that cross state, regional, national, and international boundaries. Accompanying these standards is a unified accreditation process designed to help educational institutions continuously improve.

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