

**Report of the
Quality Assurance Review Team
for
Columbia County School System**

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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), and the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA) are accreditation divisions of AdvancED.

Quality Assurance Review Report

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About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

Background. Founded in 1895, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and Schools (SACS CASI) accredit public and private schools and districts in 30 states, the Navajo Nation, Latin America, and the Department of Defense Schools worldwide.

In 2006, NCA CASI, SACS CASI, and the research and development arm of the accrediting associations, the National Study of School Evaluation, unified to form AdvancED. Dedicated to advancing excellence in education, AdvancED provides accreditation, research, and professional services to 23,000 schools in 65 countries, serving 15 million students.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED. Through AdvancED, NCA CASI and SACS CASI have defined shared, research-based accreditation standards that cross state, regional, and national boundaries. Accompanying these standards is a unified accreditation process designed to help schools, school districts, and educational service agencies continuously improve.

The Accreditation Process. To earn and maintain accreditation from NCA CASI or SACS CASI, school districts and their schools must:

- 1) Meet the AdvancED Standards and Policies for Quality School Systems.** School districts demonstrate adherence to the seven AdvancED standards and policies which describe the quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for school districts to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness.
- 2) Engage in continuous improvement.** School districts and their schools implement a continuous improvement process that articulates the vision and purpose that the school district is pursuing (vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school and district effectiveness, and the school community (profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (results).
- 3) Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review.** School districts and schools engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, school districts host an external quality assurance review team once every five years. The team evaluates the school district's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the school district's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and required actions to help the school district improve. The team provides an oral exit report to the school district and a written report detailing the team's required actions. The school district acts on the team's required actions and submits a progress report two years following the review.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI accreditation engages the entire school district community in a continuous process of self-evaluation and improvement. The overall aim is to help school districts and their schools maximize student success and improve organizational effectiveness

Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

Purpose. The purpose of the Quality Assurance Review is to:

1. Evaluate the school district's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards and policies.
2. Assess the efficacy of the district's improvement process and methods for quality assurance.
3. Identify commendations and required actions to improve the district and its schools.
4. Make an accreditation recommendation for review by the national AdvancED Accreditation Commission.

A key aim of the Quality Assurance Review is to verify that the school district is operating with institutional integrity - that it is fulfilling its vision and mission for its students.

School District Preparation. To prepare for the Quality Assurance Review, the school district and the community complete the AdvancED Standards Assessment Report. The report engages the district in an in-depth self assessment of each of the seven AdvancED standards. The school district identifies and describes the evidence that demonstrates that it is meeting each standard. Through this internal review, the school district examines how its systems and processes contribute to student performance and school district effectiveness.

Summary of Team Activities. The Quality Assurance Review Team is led by an AdvancED certified District Lead Evaluator and comprised of professionals from outside the school district. The team reviews the findings of the school district's internal self-assessment, conducts interviews with representative groups of stakeholders, reviews student performance data and other documentation provided by the school district, and observes practices and daily operations. The team engages in professional deliberations to reach consensus on the school district's adherence to the standards for accreditation. The team provides an oral exit report and prepares a written Quality Assurance Review Team Report designed to help the school district and its schools improve.

The Quality Assurance Review Team Report. Following the visit, the review team completes the Quality Assurance Review report. After review by a nationally-trained reader, the report is submitted to the district. The report contains commendations and required actions for improvement.

Using the Report - Responding to the Required Actions. The school district uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The school district is held accountable for addressing the required actions identified in the report. The AdvancED State Office is available to assist the school district in addressing the required actions. Following the Quality Assurance Review Team visit, the school district must submit a progress report detailing the actions and progress it has made on the team's required actions. The report is reviewed at the state and national level to ensure the school district is addressing the required actions.

Accreditation Recommendation. The Quality Assurance Review team uses the findings from the onsite visit to make an accreditation recommendation that is reviewed by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission. Accreditation is granted by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission and communicated to the school district following action from the commission.

Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the SACS CASI Georgia State Office (SACS-CASI-GA), a division of AdvancED, visited Columbia County School System on 02/27/2011 - 03/02/2011.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 97 administrators, 170 teachers, 29 support staff, 125 parents and business partners, 131 students, and 5 Board of Education members for a total of 557 stakeholders. In addition to meeting with district personnel and stakeholders, the team visited 8 schools within the school district. During the school visits, team members interviewed school stakeholders, observed classrooms, and reviewed relevant school artifacts. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the district. Specifically, the team examined the district's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

1. Vision and Purpose
2. Governance and Leadership
3. Teaching and Learning
4. Documenting and Using Results
5. Resource and Support Systems
6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships
7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The AdvancED standards focus on systems with a school district and systematic methods of attaining high student performance and organizational effectiveness. The power of the standards lies in the connections and linkages between and among the standards. The Quality Assurance Review Team used the AdvancED standards to guide its review of the school district, looking not only for adherence to individual standards, but also for how the school district and its schools function as a whole and embody the practices and characteristics of a quality school district.

Through its examination of the school district's adherence to the standards, the Quality Assurance Review Team prepared reports on each standard, highlighting strengths and suggestions for improvement specific to each standard. These reports can be found following this summary.

The Quality Assurance Review Team also examined the effectiveness of the district's methods for quality assurance. The team reviewed the district's practices and methods to monitor and document improvement, provide meaningful feedback and support across the district, ensure that AdvancED standards are met and strengthened, and regularly collect, use, and communicate results. The team's findings in this area can be found following the standard reports.

The team used the standard reports and quality assurance findings to identify common themes, significant accomplishments, and pressing needs facing the district. These became the basis for the overall commendations and required actions that are provided below. The commendations and required actions should serve as the focus for the district as it acts on the team's findings. They represent the areas that the team believes will have the greatest impact in helping the district further its improvement efforts. The standard reports and quality assurance findings can be used to help reinforce and enrich the district's understanding of the commendations and required actions.

Commendations

The Quality Assurance Review Team commends the Columbia County School System for the following strengths and accomplishments. While additional strengths are noted in the detailed review of each standard that appears later in this report, the commendations listed below are the strengths that the team believes are most deserving of being highlighted.

- **The visionary leadership and synergy between the board of education and superintendent has created a strong commitment to sustaining a culture of excellence that pervades the entire system.**

Stakeholder interviews consistently identified that the Superintendent and Board of Education work in tandem to provide leadership and clear direction for the system. They successfully led efforts that resulted in the passage of the Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (ESPLOT) in 1997, 2002, 2007, and 2012. These funds have resulted in the implementation of the 2010-17 Building Plan that enables the district to ensure facilities are up-to-date and in sufficient number to accommodate the increasing student population.

The synergistic relationship of the board of education, superintendent, and district leadership have created the conditions necessary to anticipate future need to ensure its students continue to achieve at high levels.

- **The district is a conscientious steward of financial and human resources which allows for the appropriate and sufficient allocations necessary to achieve the system's vision to provide a world-class education to all students.**

The district is operating in an environment of severe financial constraints with the continuing reduction in state funding, the end of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds, and the increased demands placed upon it as a result of continuing population growth. In spite of this, the district allocates 81% of its budget to fund teacher salaries, textbooks, and instructional materials. In addition, an ample reserve fund is maintained to address financial emergencies.

Fiscal responsibility and careful management of resources by district leadership under adverse conditions enables the district to ensure schools have the necessary resources to ensure its students continue to perform at high levels.

- **The district has adopted a student-centered framework for decision making that is consistent and pervasive throughout all departments and schools within the system.**

Department Action Plans and School Improvement Plans are directly aligned to achieve the district's Eleven Goals for Standards or Student Performance. The district's decision making model requires all department heads and principals to demonstrate all components of their action plans are focused on the achievement of the Eleven Goals prior to their approval by the Board of Education. In addition, the progress of the plans are monitored and reviewed during the school year.

The student-centered framework for decision making enables the district to maintain a laser focus on student success and allocate resources to sustain the high standard for student performance.

- **The district employs a comprehensive system of communication that includes multiple avenues to**

share and gather information from stakeholders related to student achievement and organizational effectiveness.

The superintendent meets quarterly with a variety of stakeholder advisory groups; the district administers stakeholder perception surveys, and utilizes its website to elicit stakeholder input. The Superintendent's Annual Report, provided in paper and digital format, brochures, newspaper coverage, and district/school websites provide venues through which the district informs internal and external stakeholders of student achievement results and progress in meeting district goals.

A viable two-way communication system enables the district to garner and maintain a high level of understanding of and commitment to the achievement of its vision across all categories of stakeholders. This is essential to sustain the culture of excellence and the high level of student performance and district effectiveness.

Required Actions

In addition to the commendations, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following required actions for improvement. The team focused its required actions on those areas that, if addressed, will have the greatest impact on improving student performance and overall effectiveness of the school district. The Columbia County School System will be held accountable for making progress on each of the required actions noted in this section. Following this review, the school district will be asked to submit a progress report on these required actions. The district should refer to the detail provided in the standard reports for guidance and greater depth on the required actions.

- **Develop and implement a systemic and sustainable action plan that addresses the academic and socio-emotional needs of the increasing number of students enrolled from diverse backgrounds (i.e low socioeconomic status, various ethnicities, and special needs populations) as a result of district trends in growth and rezoning.**

While student performance on standardized tests is currently at very high levels, the ripple effect issues that arise by the increase in fragile populations must be addressed in order for the district to bring their vision of creating a world class education for all students to fruition. During interviews with internal and external stakeholders, they identified the need to provide special services to the aforementioned populations. The capital outlay plan is evidence of the district's direct response to the district's growth and shifting demographic trends.

The trend culled from district data provides evidence that the changing demographics is not an isolated event. The continuing capacity of the district to provide excellent educational opportunities is dependent upon its ability to allocate the necessary resources within a challenging economic climate to continue to address the needs of all students.

Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools: The team reviewed the district's adherence to each of the AdvancED standards. The findings from this review are provided in the next section of this report.

Next Steps

The school district 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 commendations section to maximize their impact on the school district.
3. Develop action plans to address the required actions made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the required actions.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the school district's efforts to improve student performance and district effectiveness.
5. Two years following the Quality Assurance Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the required actions. The report will be reviewed at the state and national level to ensure that significant progress is being made toward the required actions. Lack of progress can result in a change in accreditation status.
6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

Resources

AdvancED offers a range of resources to support your school district as it acts on the findings in this report. The AdvancED Resource Network, available at www.advanc-ed.org/resourcenetwork, provides an online network of peer-to-peer practices, best practices, and resources and tools designed to help school districts and their schools with continuous improvement.

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the visit, the Quality Assurance Review Team submits an accreditation recommendation to AdvancED for review and action at the national level by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the school district. Upon receiving its accreditation, the school district should celebrate its achievement with the community. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and other related items can be ordered from the website to help you share your accomplishment with your community.

Summary

The accreditation process engages the school district, its schools, and community in an ongoing journey of continuous improvement. The next steps in this journey are to build on the commendations and address the required actions noted in this report. Doing so will enable the school district to advance in its quest for excellence and deepen the fulfillment of its mission for all students.

Standards for Accreditation

The primary requirement for accreditation is that the district demonstrates that it meets the seven standards for accreditation. The findings of the Quality Assurance Review Team regarding the standards for accreditation are summarized on the following pages.

The Quality Assurance Review Team divided into standard teams to review each standard and prepare a standards report summarizing the team's findings. These standard reports, along with the quality assurance findings that follow these reports, provided the basis for the team's identification of over-arching commendations and required actions presented earlier in this report. The reports submitted by each team are provided on the following pages for the district's review and use. Each report reflects its respective team's unique voice, perspective, and deliberations. The reports can be used to help enrich and deepen the district's understanding of the overall commendations and required actions.

Standard 1. Vision & Purpose

Standard: The system establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the system.

Description:

The district has a system-wide vision and purpose statement. The statement was developed in collaboration with its stakeholders. The SACS Cabinet, functioning as a steering committee, reviewed the former vision and mission statement and made minor changes to emphasize the immediacy of the needs stated in the original vision and purpose statement. The revised statement was subjected to comments by the central office staff and building principals and further revised. The resulting statement was published on the school system's web site, and parents and other stakeholders were invited to comment. Following stakeholder review, the vision and purpose were adopted by the Columbia County Board of Education on December 14, 2010. This statement was widely disseminated through the local media, framed posters displayed in multiple locations in the district office building and schools. It is also prominently featured in the "Columbia County School System's Annual Report," informally known as the "Superintendent's Report."

The vision and purpose statement consists of the vision, three guiding principles outlining the purpose for the system, and eleven standards of student performance. These statements clearly communicate the system's vision and purpose and act to build stakeholder understanding and support. They also highlight school improvement needs. Interviews conducted by the Quality Assurance Review (QAR) team with stakeholders including central office administrators, support staff, principals, parents, partners, and friends, and in eight schools including school level administrators, support staff, teachers, students, and parents, partners, and other community stakeholders revealed the vision statement of "Providing a world-class education for all students" was universally known, accepted, understood, and supported by all. However, there was not a corresponding recognition among the stakeholders of the three Guiding Principles adopted by the district to specifically identify the actions necessary to provide a world-class educational experience for all students.

The eleven standards are specific and measurable. They are generally based on state performance requirements and constitute the system-wide goals advancing the school district's vision and purpose.

Data supporting the vision and beliefs are reported annually or more often through the following means: Principals' Checkout Data, Superintendent's Report of Progress, system departmental action plans, school improvement plans, state testing data, benchmarking, progress monitoring, and instructional walk-throughs. Then data reported on the foregoing is summarized annually in the Columbia County Board of Education profile of the system, students, and the community. This profile is an essential part of the Columbia County School System's Annual Report mentioned above.

The academic and non-academic improvement goals of each school's improvement plan are driven by the eleven standards appropriate for the school's grade level and performance. This was verified through school visits conducted by the QAR team which included interviews with school principals, steering committees members, and teachers. It was also verified through the review of artifacts including posters, and other material including handbooks, school improvement plans, principals' checkout data requirements, school-system departmental action plans, and walk-through rubrics used by district-wide personnel making school monitoring visits. The vision and process statements constitute the district's strategic plan guiding the operation of the central office departments, both instructional and service, and the schools. The reporting process mentioned above insures district-wide departmental and school accountability in accomplishment of the district's vision and purpose through the teaching and learning process.

At the end of each academic year the district reviews test and non-academic data system-wide, and for each school, in view of the vision, purpose, and standards. The vision, purpose, and standards are then revised as necessary to address the greatest needs and the school improvement cycle repeated.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- The district has a strategic plan addressing State of Georgia academic and non-academic requirements for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and No Child Left Behind.
- The schools address their greatest needs as identified by academic test results and non-academic data in their annual school improvement plans.
- School principals make an annual report to the superintendent detailing their schools' performance assuring accountability for need-based school improvement.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Emphasize the intent and importance of the three guiding principles making them more meaningful to the stakeholders. There is evidence district's stakeholders and schools' stakeholders are generally aware of the school-systems' vision and purpose. However, no one was able to state or accurately summarize the three guiding principles outlining the school system's purpose.
- Provide an active review of the school system's vision and purpose including those stakeholders not otherwise involved as part of their next revision.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Columbia County School System has met the accreditation requirements for the "Vision & Purpose" standard.

Standard 2. Governance & Leadership

Standard: The system provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and system effectiveness.

Description:

Artifact reviews and interviews indicate the district's policies and procedures are current and effectively guide its operation. Members of the district leadership team are assigned the oversight of specific policies to ensure they are up to date and reflect current needs of the district and enable it to comply with state and federal legislation and regulations. The district employs a systematic process to provide for the introduction, stakeholder review, and board approval of new or revised policies. A review of the district's organizational chart reveals a clear delineation of leadership functions and oversight roles. Interviews consistently revealed board members understand their role, and maintain effective relationships with the superintendent and his staff. New board members are provided with an orientation, and all members participate in ongoing training to improve their performance. The board retains legal council, and an attorney is present during executive sessions when needed.

The board and district leadership have effectively built strong support among parents and other external stakeholders. An example being the recent passage of the ESPLOT to fund long range building plans, acquire land, and provide needed technology resources. Interviews with district and school staff and parents consistently indicate the board and superintendent effectively utilize all available personnel and financial resources to meet district goals. An ample reserve fund is maintained to address fiscal emergencies. Current state budget cuts however, threaten the ability of district leadership to sustain the current culture of excellence and effectively implement the district's vision, strategic plan and student performance goals.

The district systematically reviews student performance results and organizational effectiveness. Interviews with central office staff and artifact review substantiate rigorous and timely reviews of progress. All involved must demonstrate their department plans are aligned with and support meeting identified student learning goals. Interviews with support staff clearly demonstrated they possess a high level of understanding that everyone's job has one goal; that of ensuring every student's success. Schools are held to the same standard when submitting their improvement plans.

Effective communication processes between the superintendent and his staff, local schools, and external stakeholders have been established. The superintendent meets quarterly with various advisory groups of teachers, students, and community members. Stakeholder perception surveys are administered annually and the district systematically seeks stakeholder input on significant issues utilizing a variety of venues such as focus groups and its website. Weekly staff meetings, monthly principals' conferences, bi-monthly board meetings, webinars, and the district's website provide multiple and varied avenues of two-way communication within the district and community. Interviews with parents verify that they value the "open door" policy of the superintendent, and his ability to address their concerns in a timely manner.

The district implements an evaluation system for all certified and support staff that includes both formative and summative performance assessment. Professional growth opportunities are available for all staff that align with system goals and are accessible within the constraints of declining funding from the state.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- The board functions well within their role, and does not engage in micro-managing the superintendent and his staff.
- Multiple and varied two-way avenues of communication between and among district staff, local school personnel, and external stakeholders have been established and function effectively.
- The board and superintendent are outstanding stewards of the district's financial and human resources.
- District professional and support staff work well together and maintain a "student centered" focus in decision making.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Explore means to obtain additional funding streams to replace federal, state, and local funds that are no longer available, due to the declining financial support from the state which threatens the ability of the district to maintain its current, outstanding student performance goals, meet the goals of the district's strategic plan, and effectively implement the vision of the school system.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional," indicating that the Columbia County School System has met the accreditation requirements for the "Governance & Leadership" standard.

Standard 3. Teaching & Learning

Standard: The system provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Description:

The district develops, articulates and coordinates curriculum based on the Georgia Performance Standards. Collaboratively developed curriculum maps are utilized district wide and guide instruction and pacing. Learning Focused Schools strategies are pervasive in classrooms throughout the district highlighting expectations for student learning, including essential knowledge and skills.

Classroom observations indicate students are actively engaged in the teaching and learning process. Essential questions are consistently posted in classrooms and students are able to articulate what they are expected to learn and be able to do. The system has placed an emphasis on higher order thinking skills as evidenced by the inclusion of this indicator on the revised walk-through observation form. Interviews with teachers, and district level staff reveal the need to continue to make progress in this area. Classroom observations in schools revealed teachers questioning students in ways that promote deep discussion and student work displayed in classrooms and halls showed evidence of higher order thinking skills.

The district ensures that system-wide curricular and instructional decisions are based on data and research. For example, School Improvement Plans have been revised to include a data profile section. An analysis of the data profile is then used to develop the school improvement strategies. Once these strategies are implemented, student performance is measured using benchmark data. The district is piloting a benchmark data management system which provides data analysis that is used to inform instruction at the classroom level. Benchmark testing appears to be consistent and pervasive at the elementary and middle school levels, however, while evident at the high school level, it does not appear to be as systematically

implemented as the other grade bands. Additionally, teacher interviews indicate evidence that common unit assessments are being collaboratively developed and utilized, results of which are analyzed to further inform instruction. However, evidence does not support that this practice is systematic and pervasive across the district, especially in high schools.

Best practices are evident throughout the district. In addition to Learning Focused Schools strategies, classroom observations and interviews with teachers and students indicate differentiated instruction is provided to students. Having identified math as an instructional focus for the district, teachers have participated in professional learning with Dr. Paul Riccomini as a way to improve mathematical instructional delivery through research based strategies. Implementation of “Riccomini” strategies was evident in teacher interviews and classroom visits.

The district provides a curriculum that is rigorous and rich in choice for students. A review of the 9-12 course catalog indicates many curricular options from Advanced Placement courses to Career Tech Educational opportunities. In all grade bands, instructional extension periods are being utilized to both enrich and remediate students as needed. Also evident in both teacher and district interviews is a strong commitment to the Response to Intervention (RtI) process to ensure that each student is afforded the supports needed in order to be successful.

Teacher and student interviews and classroom observations indicate that instructional time is valued and protected in the district. Some schools prominently post signs reminding parents of the importance of scheduling outside appointments at times that do not interfere with students’ instructional time. Interruptions are minimized and a review of master schedules indicates maximum usage of the school day for instructional purposes

Articulation among and between grade bands is evidenced by vertical alignment of curriculum throughout the district. Additionally, both district office and teacher interviews indicate vertical teaming as part this development. Academic supports are in place as students’ transition from one grade band to another. For example, fifth and eighth graders are identified early using benchmark data to determine how many sections of Instructional Extension or Math and Basic Skills Labs will need to be built into the master schedules at feeder middle schools and high schools, respectively. Students who are not successful as first-time test takers are provided a remediation program and re-tested. While remediation and re-testing has occurred in a summer school session in the past, decreasing funds have resulted in this program being built into the school year as of late. If students prove to be unsuccessful on the re-test attempt, they are invited to participate in additional programs such as Summer Academies before transitioning to the next grade band with the additional support classes in place.

In addition to providing academic supports for struggling students, the district offers a variety of events and programs that attend to the socio-emotional needs of students as they approach new settings. Prior year school visits, parent nights, orientation sessions, and early “open houses” are examples of events promoting ease of transition. Although the Bridge Bill requires eighth grade students to receive career and academic counseling, the district has gone above and beyond to provide the means for students to successfully transition from middle to high school. Specifically, each eighth grade student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) meet individually with a ninth grade counselor for course selection and orientation to high schools. Agreements with local colleges for dual-enrollment opportunities, along with work based learning opportunities for students while in high school, are ways evidenced to ensure students are ready for future schooling or employment.

As indicated earlier, interventions for struggling students are apparent throughout the district. All elementary and middle schools have instructional extension periods built into the school day to provide

remediation opportunities for struggling students. Because it is a pilot year, only one high school has currently built a “power period” or instructional extension into the school day, but interviews with the principal, teachers and students indicate the program has been extremely successful in improving student achievement. Additionally, students have opportunities for before and after school tutoring in both structured programs and with individual teachers. If students continue to struggle as increasing supports are provided, they are moved along the tiers in the RTI process. The Columbia County Pyramid of Academic Interventions evidences a menu of interventions available in both reading and mathematics at each tier to support struggling students. Expanded growth and changing demographics, along with re-zoning, have caused some schools to experience dramatic shifts in the face of their student population over the past few years. While professional learning opportunities to address these changes are evident, interviews revealed some teachers are still struggling with making instructional adjustments and interventions appropriate for the change in population. These demographic changes warrant on-going and continuous professional development to support teachers in schools where there are changing populations to ensure teachers are equipped to effectively meet the diverse learning needs of all students.

To maintain a system-wide climate that supports student learning, many schools have implemented a Positive Behavior System (PBS). From student interviews in these schools, it was evident that they buy-in to this program, as they cited that they felt it reduced behavior problems and promoted a sense of community and kindness in their school. Teacher interviews also support the effectiveness of the PBS program. Because this is a pilot year, evidence does not currently support implementation of a PBS in all schools.

Not only are curriculum maps developed collaboratively and utilized throughout the district, they are also revised annually. Teacher representatives from each school, in each subject area, meet with curriculum directors in the summer to revise and update the curriculum maps and pacing guides. Updated curriculum maps are presented to and approved by school board members and posted on the district web-site for public viewing.

A review of the artifacts indicates both a district wide technology and media services plan. Student, teacher and parent interviews indicate students have access to technology. Classroom observations revealed consistent use of Smartboards and other technology. However, it appears recent budget cuts have reduced the number of technology support specialists available to provide support to schools for technology implementation.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- The district has developed and annually revises curriculum maps in all subject areas. The curriculum maps are utilized by teachers district wide for instruction and pacing.
- Learning Focused School strategies and other best practices are consistent and pervasive throughout all schools in the district.
- Instructional decisions are data-driven and gains in student achievement are evident, despite dwindling resources.
- Benchmark testing in AYP content areas is systematically conducted and results analyzed and used to inform instruction at the elementary and middle school levels.
- The district provides a curriculum that is rigorous and rich in choice.
- Both academic and socio-emotional supports are in place as students transition from one grade band to another.
- A wide variety of interventions are implemented to support struggling students.
- The district is technology rich and utilizes technology to support and enhance learning.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Implement benchmark testing in core content at the high school level in a more systematic manner.
- Implement benchmark testing in science and social studies at the elementary level.
- Focus on increasing the effectiveness of instructional delivery focused on the development of higher order thinking skills among all students.
- Build on collaboratively developed common unit assessments to be utilized to inform instruction in all grade bands and content areas.
- Systematically evaluate the effectiveness of the high school instructional extension (power/prides periods) to make an informed decision regarding its expansion to other high schools.
- Provide on-going and continuous professional development to support leaders, teachers, and support staff to meet the diverse needs of students in schools experiencing changing demographics.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Columbia County School System has met the accreditation requirements for the "Teaching & Learning" standard.

Standard 4. Documenting & Using Results

Standard: The system enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and system effectiveness.

Description:

The district systematically administers a comprehensive assessment system inclusive of all state mandated tests as well as district made formative assessments. It disseminates testing schedules; uses standard based report cards in grades K-2, and provides models of tests for teachers. The district systematically utilizes benchmark tests at the elementary level in reading and math, administered and the results analyzed three times per year. Multiple criteria are used to identify targeted students who are benchmarked in the middle and high schools. Assessment guidelines are clearly articulated for all students, and are included in student and faculty handbooks. Formative assessments are frequent and on-going.

The district is in the beginning stages of developing and administering common assessments. Interviews with district staff and school level personnel and artifact review revealed that the use of common assessments are more prevalent at the elementary level. This is due to the district's decision to implement common assessments incrementally. The plan includes the continued expansion of the development and use of common assessments at the middle and high school levels.

Student achievement data are reported out in the data profile section of district and school improvement plans. These results are instrumental in guiding decision making at the district and school levels related to curriculum and instructional delivery, and the identification of related district and school improvement goals. Principals' conferences and faculty agendas document that discussion of student assessment results is on-going and contributes to a dynamic decision-making process that requires adjustments in instruction are made in response to the most current results. Some schools identify intervention/enrichment or extension periods to address student needs and build these into the instructional day. Currently there is an uneven implementation of these programs system-wide. The district is presently encouraging the system-wide implementation of data rooms/boards for public display. However, observations and interviews at the school level indicate variations in the level and degree of use.

The district monitors organizational effectiveness by distributing surveys, soliciting input from school councils, stakeholder advisory councils, and conducts administrative walkthroughs to measure fidelity of implementation of instructional initiatives. The use of walk-throughs is relatively recent and the QAR team notes a need for a more systematic focus to promote consistency across all levels of schools. Additionally, the implementation of vertical planning among grades and school levels is relatively recent and the QAR team encourages the district to continue its focus on this process to ensure a seamless implantation K-12. The development and distribution of the system-wide strategic plan, superintendent's annual report, and balanced report cards document the district's continued and focused commitment to improving student and system performance.

The district's communication process for disseminating information related to student performance include, but is not limited to, school council meetings, school board meetings, Columbia County School System Annual Report, newsletters, individual student test results and the district's web site. School web-sites and parent portals are available to parents and stakeholders. Interviews with parents revealed some frustration that these sites were not as informative or user friendly as they would like.

Interviews with the superintendent and teachers indicate the district's awareness of trend data from comparable schools which artificats support. The district is piloting "Data Director" for comprehensive assessment. The district also recently purchased and is utilizing Infinite Campus, a student data management system that is endorsed by the board of education and is aligned with the district's policy's guidelines. Student data is password protected.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- The district employs a comprehensive and systematic process for analysis of multiple sources of student performance, ex: benchmark testing, common assessments, and standardized tests to inform decision making related to continuous improvement and strategic planning.
- The district is encouraging the implementation of common assessments and data rooms/boards for professional public display to strengthen its capacity to sustain current high levels of student performance and identify additional means to meet the needs of its growing population of students with diverse learning needs.
- The district systematically monitors organizational effectiveness by soliciting input from all stakeholders utilizing venues such as school councils, stakeholder advisory councils, focus groups, and surveys.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Build on the recent implementation of administrative walk-throughs to ensure they are systematically and consistently administered across all levels of schools.
- Review current school websites to ensure they include comprehensive and consistent content across the system.
- Analyze the results of the current implementation of data rooms/data boards to ensure their use is consistent across the district and contributes to getting desired results related to student achievement.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Columbia County School System has met the accreditation requirements for the "Documenting & Using Results" standard.

Standard 5. Resource & Support Systems

Standard: The system has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Description:

The district is committed to hiring high quality teachers who meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind, but who, more importantly, meet the district's expectations of highly qualified. The district systematically conducts screenings, which include participation of central office personnel and principals, to ensure those hired meet the criteria necessary to support the district in meeting its vision to "provide a world class education for all students". Presently all teachers are 100% Highly Qualified. Principal, parent and community stakeholder interviews consistently identified this as strength of the district. The district utilizes a variety of recruitment fairs to expand its candidate pool. Newly hired teachers participate in a new teacher orientation and are provided the support of a mentor. The district's professional learning program is based on assessed teacher needs and student performance results. Artifact reviews and interviews support all offerings are directly aligned to district goals and meeting the specific learning needs of students.

The district provides a differentiated system of personnel evaluation that focuses on professional growth. In addition to the Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program (GTEP), the district utilizes a locally developed performance appraisal instrument to recognize and support continued excellence among veteran teachers. The evaluation system for non-certified staff is also grounded in a growth model. Performance is reviewed annually. Support staff consistently recognized they are held to high expectations of performance and shared their appreciation of the support the district provides them to meet these expectations. Interviews further revealed these staff members are deeply committed to ensuring the success of all students. They shared specific examples of the ways in which the district contributes to student success by ensuring payroll is met, buildings are well-maintained, and buses run efficiently, safely, and on time. These practices are consistent with the district's laser focused commitment to maintaining a culture of excellence. The district securely maintains personnel records via hard copy in individual files within Doc-e-Fill, a secure web-based employee records program.

The district engages in a comprehensive, inclusive, and student centered long-range budget planning. Each department and school provides input into the budget process. Department budgets are systematically reviewed to ensure resources are deployed to meet current district goals. School budgets are submitted for review by the Assistant Superintendent for Student Learning to ensure they are focused on meeting district improvement goals and the specific school improvement goals. The passage of the ESPLOT has enabled the district to fund a long range three phase building project to replace and rebuild out dated school buildings, acquire land, purchase school buses, and provide technology hardware upgrades. The district allocates \$2500 to each school for school improvement, and mini-grants are sponsored by local business partners to support schools' continuous improvement efforts. The fiscally responsible actions of the superintendent and the board of education currently allow the district to allocate sufficient and appropriate resources to meet the system's vision, mission, and goals. However, the current economic downturn, combined with the continuing growth and a changing student demographic, has raised serious concerns related to the district's continuing capacity to allocate appropriate and sufficient

resources to sustain the high level of student performance and organizational effectiveness.

Interviews and artifact reviews substantiate that the district has systems in place to safeguard proper budgetary procedures. The Business and Financial Operations Department provides necessary communication and training regarding all required procedures. Financial reports are reviewed monthly, and an annual audit is conducted of individual school/principal accounts, fixed assets, School Nutrition Program, and all federal programs.

The district implements a comprehensive system of support services designed to support the health, counseling, nutrition, safety, transportation, and special learning needs of all students. These include the Department of Special Services, Department of Psychological Services, Facility Maintenance and Operations, Guidance and Counseling, School Nutrition, School Nurses and Transportation. Students with special needs are supported through the Department of Special Services. In addition to conducting observations and evaluations, school psychologists support the implementation of Response to Intervention (RtI). Every school in the district has at least one guidance counselor. In addition to providing individual, group and classroom guidance, parent training and career and college counseling are a part of the total counseling program.

School nurses are assigned to every elementary school. Each elementary nurse is on call to provide assistance to an assigned middle or high school on an emergency basis. The Transportation Department has implemented the Edulog program to develop bus routes to increase operational efficiency and elevate the safety of the more than 13,000 students transported to and from school each day

The district's nutrition program has received recognition for having 100% membership in the Georgia School Nutrition Association, Mentor of the Year, and Silver Scroll. The Silver Scroll Award was received for meeting identified goals for promoting participation in and understanding of school nutrition.

The district worked collaboratively with the Columbia County Emergency Management Agency, to develop a Master School Safety Plan which is reviewed and updated annually. School safety plans were observed in schools visited. Interviews and artifact review indicate schools conduct required drills on a regular basis. School safety officers are accessible to every school within the district.

All Columbia County School System facilities are inspected annually by the Assistant Superintendent for Student Support, the Executive Director of Facilities Maintenance and Operations and his staff. In addition to this annual inspection, school administrators and school level safety committees conduct periodic inspections throughout the year. Inspections focus on ensuring proper working condition of all fire suppression systems, building infrastructures, lighting, electrical, mechanical, water, and air quality devices, as well as, parking, playground, athletic facilities and safety concerns.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- The district engages in a systemic, systematic, and student centered long-range budget planning process and allocates sufficient resources to support the accomplishment of its vision to “provide a world class education for all students”.
- The leadership of the superintendent and board of education to garner the support of the community, resulted in the passing of the passage of the ESPLIT which has enabled the district to fund a three phase building project to replace and rebuild out dated school buildings, acquire land, purchase school buses, and provide technology hardware upgrades.

- The district is successful in employing a faculty and staff that is 100% highly qualified.
- The district systematically maintains sites, facilities, services and equipment in order to provide a safe, orderly and healthy environment.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Explore options to address budget constraints that threaten the district's capacity to continue to allocate resources in sufficient in kind and number to meet district goals and sustain the current culture of excellence.
- Develop and implement a plan of action to systematically address the challenging academic and socio-economic needs of the increasing number of diverse students enrolling as the result of continuing growth.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional," indicating that the Columbia County School System has met the accreditation requirements for the "Resource & Support Systems" standard.

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications & Relationships

Standard: The system fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Description:

The district has implemented multiple and varied procedures that foster effective communication including building and maintaining strong stakeholder relationships. Stakeholder input is solicited related to the support of student learning. Parents and business leaders indicated they have high regard for the communication processes currently in place in the district. They recognize that the "open door" policy of the superintendent promotes a strong collaborative relationship between the district and the stakeholders. The Superintendent's Annual Report provides a comprehensive and transparent profile of student achievement and organizational effectiveness. It further reveals a concerted effort by the district to communicate openly and candidly with the stakeholders.

Interviews with stakeholders and artifact review revealed that the district uses surveys, town hall meetings, and open forum board meetings to gather stakeholder input. Stakeholders indicated that having the opportunity to provide input in these settings serve to enhance the level of collaboration and communication between the district and its stakeholders.

Stakeholders further indicated the open and two-way communication provide multiple and frequent opportunities for input into decision making. The district values the knowledge and expertise of its stakeholders. The superintendent utilizes various advisory groups of parents, teachers, and students to solicit their expertise on a variety of topics.

They recognize that although the current budget constraints challenge the district's capacity to provide a "world class education for all students", they have confidence the district's commitment to excellence will continue due to the strong leadership of the superintendent and board, and the commitment and resourcefulness of the community.

Communication related to the district's "high expectations" for all students is effectively shared in standards based report cards, parent brochures, newsletters, and the Superintendent's Annual Report.

Parents recognized the district and school web sites as informative but further indicated they found them difficult to navigate. They identified a need for a more user friendly website. The QAR team noted discrepancies between the content and quality of the school websites. Parents consistently identified the parent portal as a cornerstone of positive district to parent communication.

Interviews revealed business partners are an important resource for schools and the district. Some business partners, however, expressed they believed they could be more helpful if the district could systematically identify needs and share this information with the business community.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- The district provides multiple and varied avenues for stakeholder engagement.
- The district is committed to a system of two-way communication with its stakeholders.
- The superintendent is visible and accessible.
- There is a high level of transparency of the superintendent and board.
- The community has a high regard for the school system and the leaders in the system as well as the leadership in the schools.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Develop a communication mechanism to clearly identify for stakeholders the specific needs of the district and schools.
- Develop and implement a system to ensure school websites are consistent in content, user friendly, and provide comprehensive and useful information for parents and other stakeholders.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional," indicating that the Columbia County School System has met the accreditation requirements for the "Stakeholder Communications & Relationships" standard.

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Standard: The system establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.

Description:

The district demonstrates it is a system that is committed to continuous improvement as evidenced by their robust collection and analysis of data to inform decisions to support its vision of “providing a world class education for all students”. At the district level, the staff utilizes comprehensive data that presents a 360 degree view of the school system. It is more than a collection of test data; it includes data from non-instructional support departments all of which affect the ability to support a viable and effective model of instructional delivery. The plan is multi-dimensional and includes archival information and identifies goals and targets for each area. Data are reported to the stakeholders through the Columbia County School System Annual Report in both print and digital format. Each school creates a similar demographic profile that reports the status of all of the major AYP subgroups. Moving beyond the reporting requirements of NCLB, schools maintain a profile of the number of students receiving services in the areas of gifted, early

intervention program (EIP), and Response to Intervention tiers. Additionally, the profiles chronicle the history of student retentions and acceleration points.

The district's vision for student achievement is interwoven into all dimensions of the continuous improvement plan and is the focus for data based decisions related to instructional and organizational effectiveness. The allocation of resources and the implementation of initiatives are based upon identified student needs based on data from the district's balanced scorecard and focus on meeting the learning needs of all students. The district has developed and implements a system-wide plan for improvement. Each school develops goals aligned to those of the district and focused on meeting the specific learning needs of its students.

To promote fidelity of implementation of instructional initiatives at the district and school levels, the district utilizes tools such as the school walk-through protocol conducted by school and central office staffs. There are also mechanisms in place to provide direction and assistance to building leadership teams such as the monthly Principals' Council Meetings and regularly scheduled school leadership team meetings. The district is working to ensure these processes are being utilized systemically and systematically. A district-wide professional learning program is in place where the offerings are identified from student assessment data and teacher needs assessment surveys. Data, both quantitative and qualitative, is collected and utilized to align professional learning with identified student needs. In addition, there is evidence of job embedded professional development being offered at the school level through professional learning communities and book studies. Schools have created unique mechanisms to protect planning time for continuous improvement by instituting collaborative planning blocks at all levels.

The initiatives and programs of improvement have assisted the district in creating a culture of excellence. The QAR team did not find evidence of a system to evaluate and document the effectiveness and impact of its continuous process of improvement. A system to evaluate the effectiveness of the continuous improvement process will generate data to allow the district to determine and ensure that all processes are aligned to support the achievement of its mission and vision and increase its capacity to sustain its current culture of excellence.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- The district has designed and utilizes a balanced score card as a part of the continuous improvement process.
- As evidenced by interviews and artifacts, stakeholders (i.e. parents, students, and community) are highly informed about and participate in the development of school improvement initiatives at the district and school level.
- The district and the school level leadership have identified their target areas/populations and have created systems for improvement and professional learning which include the use of internal and external resources and are aligned to meet student needs.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Develop and implement a formal system of evaluation to document and determine the effectiveness and impact of the district continuous process of improvement.
- Increase the frequency of the formalized monitoring and evaluating of school level improvement plans at the district level. Currently, plans are monitored at the mid-point (mid year reflections) which may not allow enough time for redirecting and revising efforts.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Columbia County School System has met the accreditation requirements for the "Commitment to Continuous Improvement" standard.

Quality Assurance Findings

The Quality Assurance Review Team examined the effectiveness of the district's methods for quality assurance. The team reviewed the district's practices and methods to monitor and document improvement, provide meaningful feedback and support across the district, ensure that AdvancED standards are met and strengthened, and regularly collect, use, and communicate results. The team provides the following findings in this area.

Description

The district leadership is committed to a systemic and systematic approach to the continuous improvement process and implementing corresponding monitoring and review processes. It provides a clearly articulated process for continuous improvement. The district's student-centered model for decision making promotes ongoing assessment of teaching and learning and organizational effectiveness. The strategic plan is reviewed monthly with principals and district leadership at Principals' Council Meetings. Department Action Plans and School Improvement Plans are directly aligned with the district's Eleven Goals for Standards or Student Performance. The district's decision making model requires all department heads and principals to demonstrate that all components of their action plans are focused on the achievement of the Eleven Goals prior to their approval by the Board of Education. In addition, the progress of the school improvement plans are monitored and reviewed during the school year. School walk-through observations are conducted annually by district staff to review the level of school implementation of school and district initiatives, and the results are folded into the yearly review with the principals. The walk-throughs were consistently identified by principals as a helpful feedback tool. However, the QAR team did not find evidence of a systematic process to ensure these walk-throughs are conducted in a timely manner. Presently, they are sporadic and dependent upon the schedule of the district leaders. Identifying and communicating a dedicated schedule of the walk-throughs with schools at the beginning of the year will increase the district's capacity to monitor progress, provide timely and helpful feedback and support, and increase the effectiveness of this important tool.

The district utilizes the professional learning communities' structure at the district and school level to facilitate ongoing conversations which focus on progress in meeting district and school improvement goals and identifying and building support for future improvement goals. The district intentionally analyzes student achievement results to identify learning gaps. This resulted in system-wide professional learning related to assessment practices utilizing a book talk format during which district and school leaders studied, "15 Fixes for Broken Grades". The district also identified the need to provide teachers professional learning and technical assistance related to differentiated math instruction. As a result, Dr. Paul Riccomini conducted system-wide professional development with follow-up support at all grade levels. The district implemented a system of protocols for administrative walk-throughs to ensure fidelity of implementation and to provide ongoing feedback to teachers related to their instructional delivery practices. Interviews conducted by the QAR team and corresponding artifact review indicate this initiative is in the beginning stages of implementation. Ensuring a deep implementation of these instructional practices across all school levels will require ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of the walk-throughs to ensure they are providing teachers the necessary feedback and support.

The district is committed to administering a comprehensive system of assessment. They have recently made the commitment to the development of common assessments K-12 to strengthen efforts to monitor student progress in a timely manner. The results of these assessments will be added to the district and schools' systematic analysis of student learning and over time will enhance the district's capacity to monitor student progress and strategically adjust instructional practices and resource allocation. The district is in the beginning stages of implementation and has focused efforts to develop common assessments at the elementary level. They will build on these efforts to expand the development and use of common assessments at the middle and high schools levels.

The district utilizes multiple means to provide two-way communication with stakeholders to inform decision making and gather input. Monthly meetings with the principals, the superintendent's quarterly meetings with stakeholder advisory groups, annual administration of stakeholder perception surveys, focus groups, the Superintendent's Annual Report of Progress, district brochures, information posted on the district and school websites are examples of the venues utilized by the district to solicit input and routinely communicate district priorities and progress in meeting improvement goals. Parent interviews identified the need to review the consistency of content and comprehensiveness of information contained on the school websites to ensure consistency of helpful information provided by these websites.

Strengths

- The systematic student-centered decision model used by district leadership is effective in ensuring decisions are focused on student needs and the district strategically deploys resources to support the district's vision and mission.
- The continuous improvement structure promotes strong alignment between the district improvement goals and those at the department and school levels.

Opportunities

- Develop a plan to monitor the effectiveness of the principal walk-throughs to ensure the process is providing strategic and helpful feedback to teachers and having the desired impact on student results.
- Identify and communicate a dedicated schedule of the district office walk-throughs with schools at the beginning of the year to increase the district's capacity to monitor schools' progress, provide timely and helpful feedback and support, and increase the effectiveness of this important tool.
- Review the consistency of content and comprehensiveness of information contained on the school websites and develop a plan to update them to ensure consistency of helpful information provided by these websites.

Schools Visited

The Quality Assurance Review team visited the following schools during the visit to the Columbia County School System on 02/27/2011 - 03/02/2011.

Grovetown Elementary School	300 Ford Ave.	Grovetown	Georgia	30813
Harlem Middle School	375 W. Forrest Street,	Harlem	Georgia	30814
Greenbrier Elementary School	5116 Riverwood Parkway	Evans	Georgia	30809
North Columbia Elementary School	2874 Ray Owens Road	Appling	Georgia	30802
Grovetown Middle School	5463 Harlem-Grovetown Road	Grovetown	Georgia	30813-
Stallings Island Middle School	3830 Blackstone Camp Road	Martinez	Georgia	30907
Lakeside High School	533 Blue Ridge Drive	Evans	Georgia	30809- 9299
Grovetown High School	2010 Warrior Way	Grovetown	Georgia	30813- 8132

Conclusion

The commendations and required actions in this report are designed to focus the school district on those areas that will have the greatest impact on student performance and system effectiveness. While powerful in potential, the commendations and required actions only have meaning when acted upon by the school district and its schools. The strength of this report lies in the school district's commitment to using the findings to continuously improve. The key is action. The school district is encouraged to use the report as a call to action, a tool to sustain momentum in the ongoing process of continuous improvement.

The team identified required actions for improvement that the school district will need to address. Following this review, the school district will be required to submit a progress report summarizing its progress toward addressing the team's required actions.

The Quality Assurance Review Team expresses appreciation to the district leadership, members of the professional staff, students, parents and other community representatives for hosting the review team. The team wishes the district and its students much success in the quest for excellence through SACS-CASI-GA accreditation with AdvancED.

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Dr. Donna James, Chair/Lead Evaluator (SACS CASI)
- Ms. Stacey Mabray, Vice Chair (Richmond County Schools)
- Dr. Glenn Dedeaux, Team Member (Biloxi Senior High School)
- Dr. Milt Marley, Team Member (Consultant - South Carolina Dept. of Ed.)
- Dr. Frank Irwin, Team Member
- Ms. Brittan Ayers, Team Member (Madison County Schools)
- Mr. Theodoris Gibbs, Team Member (Social Circle Primary School)
- Mr. Carl Roberts, Team Member (Screven County School System)

AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems

The AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems are comprehensive statements of quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for school districts to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness. As school districts reach higher levels of implementation of the standards, they will have a greater capacity to support ever-increasing student performance and organizational effectiveness. Each of the seven standards listed below has corresponding indicators and impact statements which can be accessed at www.advanc-ed.org.

Vision and Purpose

The system establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the system.

Governance and Leadership

The system provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and system effectiveness.

Teaching and Learning

The system provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Documenting and Using Results

The system enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and system effectiveness.

Resource and Support Systems

The system has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

The system fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The system establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.