

# Report of the External Review Team for Ouachita Parish School System

P.O. Box 1642  
Monroe  
LA 71210-1642  
US

**Dr. Don Coker**  
**Superintendent**

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# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	4
Results .....	10
Teaching and Learning Impact .....	10
Standard 3 - Teaching and Assessing for Learning .....	11
Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement .....	12
Student Performance Diagnostic .....	12
Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™) .....	14
eleot™ Data Summary .....	17
Findings .....	20
Leadership Capacity .....	23
Standard 1 - Purpose and Direction .....	24
Standard 2 - Governance and Leadership .....	24
Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic .....	25
Findings .....	25
Resource Utilization .....	27
Standard 4 - Resources and Support Systems .....	27
Findings .....	28
Conclusion .....	31
Accreditation Recommendation .....	38
Addenda .....	39
Individual Institution Results (Self-reported) .....	39
Team Roster .....	41
Next Steps .....	44
About AdvancED .....	45
References .....	46

# Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Use of Diagnostic Tools

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

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

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

## Index of Education Quality

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

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

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

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

## Benchmark Data

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

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

## Powerful Practices

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

## Opportunities for Improvement

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

## Improvement Priorities

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

## The Review

The Ouachita Parish School System (system) is located in northeast Louisiana, a twelve parish area boarded to the north by Arkansas and to the east by Mississippi. Further, it is located in the Delta region of Louisiana which is largely agriculture. The estimated population of the Ouachita Parish in 2015 was 157,415 (U.S. Census Bureau). The average household income was \$56,809. The parish consists of ten major communities.

The students of Ouachita are becoming increasingly diverse. Sixty-two percent of the students are white, 34% are African-American, two percent are Hispanic, one percent Asian, and one percent other. The at-risk population is also increasing. Sixty-three percent of the students are economically disadvantaged, and 11% require special educational services.

The system is in the middle of a sixty-three-million-dollar construction program with major construction projects underway. They include a new middle school, dental lab, Ag Science and multi-purpose building, stadium upgrades and additional classrooms to mention a few.

Ironically, the system is divided by a river, and that division has provided a unique local funding protocol. One side is funded by a 1% sales tax, while the other is funded by limited property taxes. Since the side with

property tax requires voter approval for any increase there is a challenge to meet increased educational needs.

The system serves approximately 19,700 students. It has a total of 2,875 employees. Of those employees 1,628 are certified faculty and 1,247 are support staff. The system is composed of 22 elementary buildings, eight middle schools, five high schools and an alternative program. Twelve of the schools are Title I schools. The free and reduced lunch program in the system has declined from 56.82% to 54.56% over the past three years. That two percent decline mirrors an unprecedented fall in enrollment.

The system is governed by a seven-member Board of Education. The members serve a four-year term, and there are four members from the west side and three on the east side of the parish. The combined years of experience of the current board totals 128 years.

The AdvancED External Review Team (Team) arrived on site on February 21 2016. The Team, composed of eight members, began its deliberations the evening of February 21, 2016, and concluded its visit on February 24, 2016 after the Lead Evaluator presented an oral Exit Report to the Ouachita Parish School System's Board of Education. The Team was on site for a total of four days and stayed in a hotel within the same parish.

The Lead Evaluator was asked to take over the team when the original Lead Evaluator had a family emergency. That occurred just two days before the visit began and the new Lead Evaluator was only able to contact team members by email prior to departure. However, the original Lead Evaluator was very thorough, organized and detailed. He had numerous contacts with the Team, had provided team assignments and coordinated the logistics. His work was exceptional and allowed the new Lead Evaluator and the Team to provide a very extensive review and robust report.

When the Team arrived on site, each member had reviewed artifacts that were presented by the system, scored Standards based on preliminary findings, reviewed system web spaces and social media areas and crafted initial questions for the Monday interviews. Team members were assigned on Tuesday to visit schools. The team visited ten schools, conducted interviews with the building leadership teams and performed eleot™ observations throughout the day.

The Team was able to conclude a vast majority of its deliberations on Tuesday evening. Each team member, while responsible for a single standard, did score and provide artifacts for all the standards. The Team worked together to develop the Powerful Practices, Opportunities for Improvement and Improvement Priorities. The team compared its findings to the AdvancED Network averages, and used standard deviation brackets to provide validity to its work.

The AdvancED Accreditation Team wishes to thank the Ouachita Parish School System, superintendent, and staff for their hospitality, openness and dedication to the review process. The advanced preparation for the review was excellent and the commitment to continued improvement, educational excellence and student-centered education was noticed and appreciated. Clearly, the Team felt the "family" notion found in the Ouachita Parish School System.



The Sunday evening meal was very enjoyable. The Lead Evaluator recognized the work of the system and the incredible support provided by all of the staff. The Superintendent introduced administrative staff and board members. The evening meal provided time for system staff and the Team to share and enjoy the time together.

The stakeholders, the Board of Education and the students were also incredible and forthcoming. The Team interviewed a very enthusiastic group of parents on Monday and the stakeholders who shared with the Team were wonderful, and shared many ideas and thoughts. One parent stated, "You can't buy this type of education."

All groups that were interviewed provided significant detail and discourse for the Team to be able to triangulate data from multiple sources. The Team interviewed a total of 129 parents, community and business leaders. That number provided much insight into the system's operational footprint from outside the system walls. One parent stated, "Parents feel important and want to be involved."

Finally, the Team enjoyed the efforts provided to secure meals, arrange lodging, prepare data that were used for the visit and allow for access to all classrooms and buildings. The Team wishes the Ouachita Parish School System success and growth as it undertakes the next five years of continued improvement.

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

Stakeholder Interviewed	Number
Superintendents	1
Board Members	5
Administrators	73
Instructional Staff	96
Support Staff	42
Students	158
Parents/Community/Business Leaders	129
<b>Total</b>	<b>504</b>

# Results

## Teaching and Learning Impact

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Standard 3 - Teaching and Assessing for Learning

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
3.1	The system's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at the next level.	3.00	2.68
3.2	Curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout the system are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice.	3.00	2.50
3.3	Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	3.00	2.55
3.4	System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	2.88	2.73
3.5	The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.	2.62	2.57
3.6	Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning.	2.62	2.48
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	2.75	2.60

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
3.8	The system and all of its schools engage families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keep them informed of their children's learning progress.	3.00	2.92
3.9	The system designs and evaluates structures in all schools whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the student's school who supports that student's educational experience.	2.00	2.40
3.10	Grading and reporting are based on clearly defined criteria that represent the attainment of content knowledge and skills and are consistent across grade levels and courses.	3.00	2.53
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	2.62	2.64
3.12	The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	3.00	2.66

### Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
5.1	The system establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	3.00	2.66
5.2	Professional and support staff continuously collect, analyze and apply learning from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data about student learning, instruction, program evaluation, and organizational conditions that support learning.	2.50	2.41
5.3	Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.	2.50	2.15
5.4	The school system engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level.	2.62	2.46
5.5	System and school leaders monitor and communicate comprehensive information about student learning, school performance, and the achievement of system and school improvement goals to stakeholders.	2.75	2.72

### Student Performance Diagnostic

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

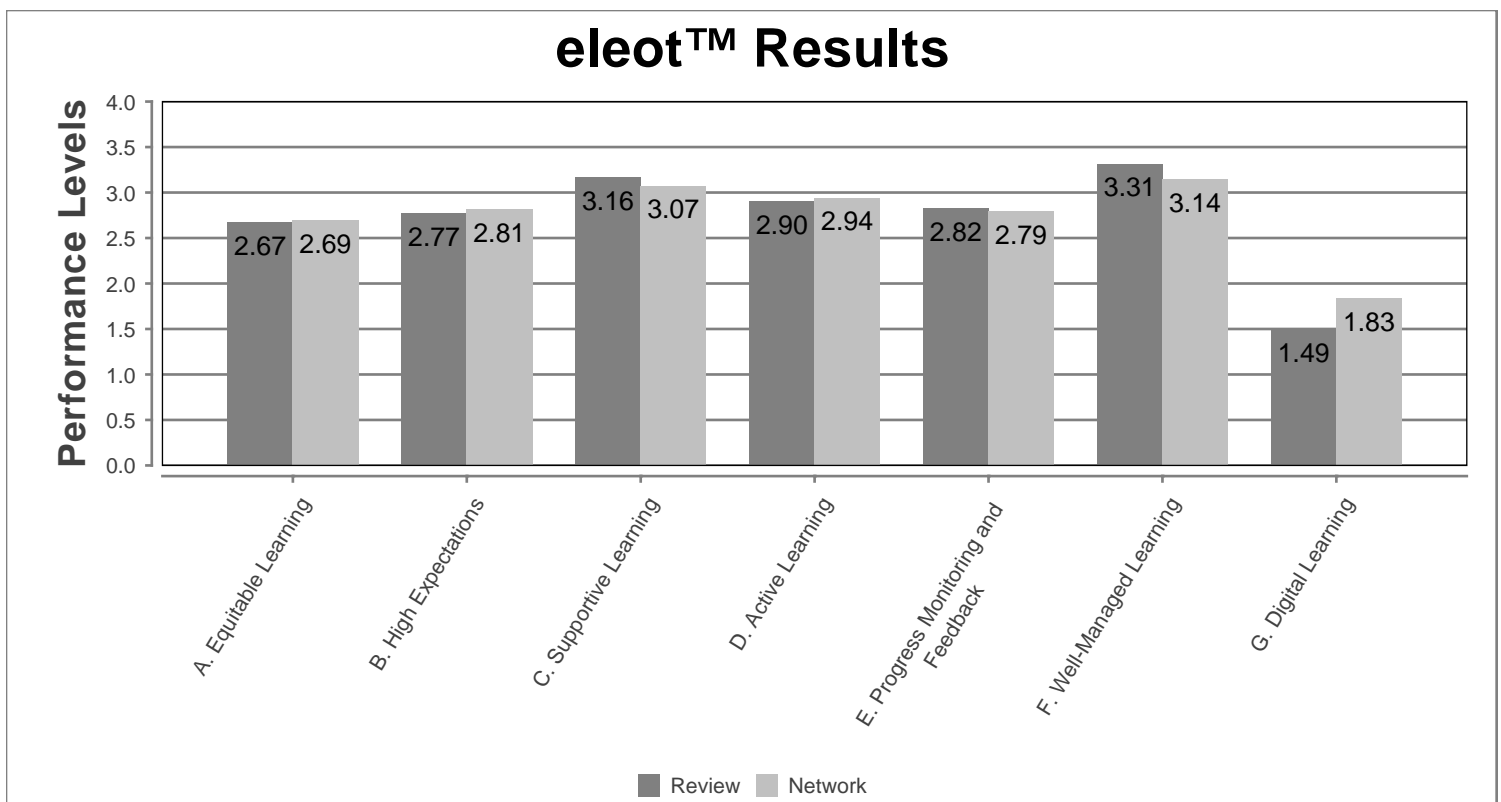
learning, and closing gaps in achievement among subpopulations of students are all important indicators for evaluating overall student performance.

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

## Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™)

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

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



The Team submitted 93 eleot™ observations after visiting ten of the system's 35 schools. Additionally, the system operates an alternative program with learning options for non-traditional students.

The Team found, through the eleot™ scores, interviews and a review of the artifacts, a very supportive and well managed learning environment. The system's average score for Supportive Learning Environment (C)

was 3.16. That exceeded the AdvancED network score average by .180, and supported the stakeholder and student interviews. One stakeholder stated, "The school cares about our children-constantly."

Interestingly, 67% of the Team scored item C (4) "...support and assistance" as either very evident or evident. Further, 95 % of the Team scored Item C (2) as either very evident or evident. That descriptor detailed a positive attitude about the classroom and learning. One student mused and stated, "I love school. I am excited about school every day."

The Well Managed Learning Environment (F) was scored at 3.31. The two sub-group items that focused on student respect for teachers and peers and adherence to classroom rules were scored at 3.51 and 3.45 respectively. The Team observed a culture of family and support. In fact, numerous parents stated, "Our community does raise our children."

The Active Learning Environment (D) and the Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment (E) were very close and their scores were only .08 apart. The Active Learning Environment was scored at 2.90 and Progress Monitoring (E) received a 2.82 from the Team. While Active Learning was .04 below the AEN, Progress Monitoring was considerably below by 25. The Team noted the entire item field under Progress Monitoring averaged a 2.82 and supported some of the findings in Standards 3 and 5.

Interestingly, the Team noted some need for system-wide policies that embrace the use and interpretation of data (Indicators 4.5, 5.2, 5.3), the expansion of informational services (Indicator 4.5) and the need to adopt a system-wide process for professional learning (Indicator 3.11). Progress Monitoring (E) Equitable Learning (A), and High Expectations (B) all rely on the ability to inform instruction from vast banks of metrics that provide individualized learning for all students.

Finally, Digital Learning (G) was scored by the Team at a 1.49. That was .33 below the AdvancED Average of 1.82, and did reflect the desire by the system to continue to focus on technology and leaning. The Team scored Indicator 4.6 at a 2.5. That score provided a viable foundation for the team's Improvement Priority for Indicator 4.5. The need to continue to engage the use of technology in the classroom is paramount. One teacher stated, "We [system] are improving every year."

Standards 3 and 5 reflected the eleot™ findings since both Standards were scored by the Team at an overall average of 2.79 and 2.67 respectively. Similarly, the Team identified two indicators in Standard 3 as an Improvement Priority (3.9, 3.11).

The Team also identified two Indicators in Standard 5 as either an Improvement Priority or Opportunity for Improvement (5.3, 5.4). The link between the Team's scoring of the five indicators and eleot™ was pervasive and provided substantial triangulated evidence with the interviews and the artifacts.

The commitment by the Board of Education to autonomy, instructional time and the safety and welfare of all students was uncommon. The learning environment was healthy and clean (Powerful Practices, Indicators 2.3, 4.2, 4.3). The Team found the varied campuses to be very conducive to learnin, and the pride shown from

all stakeholders was reflected in the buildings and the classrooms.

There appeared to be a natural connection between the standard scores and eleot™. The Teaching and Learning Domain within the Educational Quality Score was 289.88/400.00. That was slightly above the AdvancED Network Average and was reflective of the range of scores for eleot™. In fact, most of the eleot™ scores reflected a range that fell within a variance of plus or minus one form the mean.

The Team found a very impressive link among the Powerful Practices, the Improvement Priorities and the eleot™ results. Discussions with stakeholders, and the review of a plethora of artifacts, further supported the Team's deliberations. The overall summaries that followed the learning environment observations were lock-step with eleot™ as well.



**eleot™ Data Summary**

<b>A. Equitable Learning</b>			<b>%</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Very Evident</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Somewhat Evident</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
1.	2.18	Has differentiated learning opportunities and activities that meet her/his needs	10.75%	37.63%	10.75%	40.86%
2.	3.28	Has equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	33.33%	62.37%	3.23%	1.08%
3.	3.42	Knows that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied	46.24%	50.54%	2.15%	1.08%
4.	1.82	Has ongoing opportunities to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/differences	10.75%	18.28%	12.90%	58.06%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.67</b>						

<b>B. High Expectations</b>			<b>%</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Very Evident</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Somewhat Evident</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
1.	3.12	Knows and strives to meet the high expectations established by the teacher	30.11%	54.84%	11.83%	3.23%
2.	3.18	Is tasked with activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	34.41%	49.46%	16.13%	0.00%
3.	1.98	Is provided exemplars of high quality work	12.90%	21.51%	16.13%	49.46%
4.	2.88	Is engaged in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks	19.35%	52.69%	24.73%	3.23%
5.	2.67	Is asked and responds to questions that require higher order thinking (e.g., applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	20.43%	39.78%	25.81%	13.98%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.77</b>						

<b>C. Supportive Learning</b>			<b>%</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Very Evident</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Somewhat Evident</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
1.	3.22	Demonstrates or expresses that learning experiences are positive	29.03%	63.44%	7.53%	0.00%
2.	3.29	Demonstrates positive attitude about the classroom and learning	35.48%	58.06%	6.45%	0.00%
3.	3.14	Takes risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	33.33%	50.54%	12.90%	3.23%
4.	3.33	Is provided support and assistance to understand content and accomplish tasks	36.56%	60.22%	3.23%	0.00%
5.	2.84	Is provided additional/alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level of challenge for her/his needs	22.58%	49.46%	17.20%	10.75%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.16</b>						

<b>D. Active Learning</b>			<b>%</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Very Evident</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Somewhat Evident</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
1.	3.19	Has several opportunities to engage in discussions with teacher and other students	38.71%	44.09%	15.05%	2.15%
2.	2.19	Makes connections from content to real-life experiences	15.05%	31.18%	11.83%	41.94%
3.	3.30	Is actively engaged in the learning activities	40.86%	48.39%	10.75%	0.00%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.90</b>						

E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	2.81	Is asked and/or quizzed about individual progress/learning	18.28%	50.54%	24.73%	6.45%
2.	2.98	Responds to teacher feedback to improve understanding	24.73%	52.69%	18.28%	4.30%
3.	3.01	Demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of the lesson/content	23.66%	54.84%	20.43%	1.08%
4.	2.52	Understands how her/his work is assessed	17.20%	43.01%	13.98%	25.81%
5.	2.80	Has opportunities to revise/improve work based on feedback	21.51%	50.54%	13.98%	13.98%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.82</b>						

F. Well-Managed Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.51	Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers	58.06%	35.48%	5.38%	1.08%
2.	3.45	Follows classroom rules and works well with others	49.46%	46.24%	4.30%	0.00%
3.	3.25	Transitions smoothly and efficiently to activities	44.09%	41.94%	8.60%	5.38%
4.	2.89	Collaborates with other students during student-centered activities	40.86%	29.03%	8.60%	21.51%
5.	3.46	Knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences	48.39%	49.46%	2.15%	0.00%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.31</b>						

G. Digital Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	1.53	Uses digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	8.60%	10.75%	5.38%	75.27%
2.	1.42	Uses digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	4.30%	10.75%	7.53%	77.42%
3.	1.53	Uses digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning	2.15%	16.13%	13.98%	67.74%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 1.49</b>						

## Findings

### Improvement Priority

Develop and implement a structure 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.

(Indicator 3.9)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.9

#### Evidence and Rationale

The system self-assessment and stakeholder surveys indicated that services are in place at the system and school levels to provide for student needs including health, counseling, and career guidance. Further, school visits by the Team indicated that students have the opportunity to participate in organizations that build relationships with staff and other students.

However, a majority of school principals and parents indicated during interviews that there was no formal structure in place to ensure that each student is well known by at least one adult advocate who supports the student’s educational experience. Furthermore, survey results during two consecutive school years (2014-15 and 2015-16) indicated that middle and high school students ranked the statement, “My school makes sure there is at least one adult who knows me well and ensures interest in my education and future,” as the lowest among all survey respondents.

Child Advocacy is an important part of the instructional platform for all children. When a student has at least one, formally assigned, staff member to listen to concerns and ideas a child has a much stronger foundation during his/her educational career.

## **Improvement Priority**

Develop, document and implement a system wide procedure that establishes a continuous program of professional learning that includes the interpretation and use of data that provide for a system wide purpose of student success.

(Indicator 3.11, Indicator 5.3, SP4. Equity of Learning)

### Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.11

### Evidence and Rationale

The system has in place a comprehensive student assessment system. Reading Coach, Read 180, EAGLE (Louisiana Department of Education online assessment tool that supports formative assessment), and ACT are just few of the instruments providing assessment data to the system; inasmuch, provide the need for a very comprehensive and robust program of professional learning.

The Team found pockets of professional development that were vibrant and reflective. However, the Team was unable to find a comprehensive, stakeholder developed program of professional learning that was tasked, in part, to provide extensive training in the use of data. While progress monitoring occurs periodically in the buildings, some gaps were observed. One teacher stated, "We will need to continually work on the use of data."

A formalized, calendar driven and staff supported program of professional development provides all staff with a firm foundation on the continued need to inform instruction. Data are extensive, and their application to student learning is vital.

## **Opportunity For Improvement**

Develop, implement and monitor a continuous improvement process for collecting, analyzing and applying learning from multiple data sources that provide clear direction and support for learning.

(Indicator 1.4, Indicator 5.2, Indicator 5.4, SF2. Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis, SP2. Test Administration, SP3. Quality of Learning)

### Primary Indicator

Indicator 5.2

### Evidence and Rationale

The Team was able to review various professional development initiatives throughout the system that supported data interpretation and analysis; however, the Team was not able to find a system-wide process that informed staff on the collection of data. Further, since the system uses EAGLE, professional learning would be beneficial to the use of formative assessments and their application to the metrics of teaching. The Team noted the system, by learning community, meets regularly to study data to establish writing goals. Those same learning teams function at the system level as well. Ultimately, school site goals align instructional goals.

The eleot™ environments of Equitable Learning, High Expectations and Active Learning produced scores of 2.67, 2.77 and 2.90 respectively. Those scores were all below the AEN (AdvancED Network) averages. Even though classrooms across the system reflected exceptional levels within the Well-Managed Learning Environment, the development of a system-wide policy that would provide direction for improved instruction through the use of data would intensify eleot™ results. One teacher stated, “We continue to work on how the test results impact our teaching-and what we need to do.”

The use and interpretation of data are important procedures with respect to the classroom. Teachers that individualize, both by pedagogical approaches and varied learning styles, can impact student engagement, improvement of learning and differentiated instructional strategies on a daily basis.

# Leadership Capacity

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

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

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

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

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

## Standard 1 - Purpose and Direction

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
1.1	The system engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a system-wide purpose for student success.	2.38	2.62
1.2	The system ensures that each school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	2.62	2.63
1.3	The school leadership and staff at all levels of the system commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning and supports challenging, equitable educational programs and learning experiences for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills.	3.12	2.89
1.4	Leadership at all levels of the system implement a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	2.50	2.61

## Standard 2 - Governance and Leadership

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools.	3.12	2.95
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	3.00	2.92
2.3	The governing body ensures that the leadership at all levels has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.	4.00	3.12
2.4	Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction.	3.50	2.97
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction.	3.12	2.67



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

## Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic

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

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

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

## Findings

### Improvement Priority

Develop and implement a systemic process to review, revise and communicate a system-wide purpose for student success.

(Indicator 1.1)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 1.1

#### Evidence and Rationale

The Team was greeted with a beautiful new system logo, revised new system vision and mission statements and a new superintendent as of July, 2015. The review process provided a “bridge” for multiple system initiatives and issues that would help students enter the world ready for postsecondary education or the workforce (System Self-Assessment, p.15). However, the Team noted that the review of the system’s purpose had not occurred in a few years. In fact, one review committee member stated the old logo and system vision and mission statements were good “in its (sic) time.”

The Team was not able to locate any formal procedure or policy that tasked the system to review its system-wide purpose on a regular schedule and include multiple stakeholders in the process. Stakeholder interviews provided a positive response to the new logo and vision/mission statements. However, the Team was unable to interview any stakeholder that served on the review committee. In fact, many of the stakeholders had not seen the new statements or logo. That, however, was intended so the new material could be launched just before the AdvancED review (Self-Assessment, p.15). One stakeholder stated, "I would have loved to serve on the committee. This is my system." The new logo, however, was reflective of the new direction for the system and its desire, under new leadership, to prepare all students so they are ready for the world of work or postsecondary education.

The review and revision of a system's vision and mission serves as a positive and dynamic process that involves stakeholders, communicates shared visions and allows for positive involvement in the ultimate direction of a system. Further, the adherence to that vision and mission, with respect to policy and procedures, provides a focus for boards and leadership to embrace student success through a common body of beliefs and precepts.

### **Powerful Practice**

The Board of Education ensures that leadership at all levels has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.

(Indicator 2.3)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 2.3

#### Evidence and Rationale

The Team found a seven-member board of education dedicated to the support of student performance and system effectiveness. Fiscal accountability, professional development and collaboration with all staff have provided a framework for the integration of autonomy and the system mission between and among all schools and leaders.

System leadership has secured numerous research-based grants to fund innovative and educational programs. Those programs were birthed based on the board's belief that leadership should have the freedom and trust to lead for success. Literacy Design Collaborative, Math Design Collaborative, National Math and Science Initiative and the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching helped pedagogical research, student engagement and informed instruction to lead the process of success.

Autonomy is a unique balance between organizational structures guided by a vision and mission and their individual components. The need to utilize the expertise of all staff with the direction of the organization is imperative. Shared ideas and voices, through autonomy, produce excellent results.

# Resource Utilization

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

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

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

## Standard 4 - Resources and Support Systems

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.1	The system engages in a systematic process to recruit, employ, and retain a sufficient number of qualified professional and support staff to fulfill their roles and responsibilities and support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, and educational programs.	3.00	2.92
4.2	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, educational programs, and system operations.	3.38	2.93
4.3	The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	3.75	3.05
4.4	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system.	3.00	2.63

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.5	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system.	2.38	2.74
4.6	The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	2.75	2.54
4.7	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of support systems to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	3.38	2.66
4.8	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.	3.25	2.60

## Findings

### Improvement Priority

Develop and implement a systematic procedure that provides, coordinates and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system.

(Indicator 4.5)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 4.5

#### Evidence and Rationale

The Team found the need to strengthen the coordination among and between certified and support staff as related to information resources. The scope of information resources included infrastructure, digital resources, technology and educational programs throughout the system. This coordination would enhance the ability of students to utilize various resources in their search for informational data that are current and valid.

Eleot™ scored Digital Learning (G) at a 1.49. That score was below the AdvancED Network Average of 1.83. Those results indicated that while technology and digital instructional protocols may have been available, the use by the students was somewhat limited. One staff member stated, “Our students need to know how to find information and additional support is needed.” One system administrator stated, “We have nine uncertified librarians in the system and the use of information resources is a weakness for our students.”

Informational platforms, and their access, are critical components to the instructional dynamics of cognitive thought and research based decision making. That access must provide multiple avenues for ideas, research and personal data needed to make informed decisions.

### Powerful Practice

The Ouachita Parish School System is recognized for its commitment to safety and the maintenance of a

healthy and clean environment.

(Indicator 4.3)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 4.3

Evidence and Rationale

The system has implemented three-year facility, emergency and crisis management plans that ensure the safety of students, staff and visitors on school campuses. All schools have been equipped with cameras and Key access systems and school resource officers have been hired and integrated into building staffs. One parent with multiple children in the system stated, "What impressed me is the fact that both my children told me that seeing the School Resource Officer in their school building made them feel safe."

The principals collectively praised the maintenance department and stated, "We fax a form and give them a call. Many times they are out the same day and take care of business." The system considers the condition of the schools a priority regardless of financial shortages and support measures to secure campuses, including additional visitor identification and internet security.

The safety and health of all students and staff in today's educational environment is critical. Stakeholder priorities continue to show the health and safety of schools is a paramount priority for everyone. In fact, it is the most important one in the 21st century.

**Powerful Practice**

The system is recognized for its strong and purposeful commitment toward the protection of instructional time and the use of fiscal resources to support the system purpose.

(Indicator 4.2)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 4.2

Evidence and Rationale

The Team found that the system focused instructional time and material and fiscal resources on supporting the purpose and direction of the system, its schools, educational programs and system operations. Stakeholder interviews confirmed that individual schools fiercely protected instructional time. Parents stated that "commitment to education is a major strength."

Eleot™ results showed that the Well Managed Learning Environment was scored at a 3.31. That was above the AEN average of 3.14. System surveys also showed a very nice result with respect to Standard 4. A mean of 4.136 was scored using the results from the student, parent and staff surveys. Those results continued to suggest that system and school leaders work to protect instructional time.

Instructional time is critical to the demands of today's assessment driven curriculum. Supporting instructional

time with fiscal resources, staffing and reduced interruptions provides students with the much needed time for cognitive thought and small group interactions.

# Conclusion

The AdvancED External Review Team found several themes that emerged as it reviewed the system with respect to the Index of Educational Quality (IEQ). Those three areas provided the framework for diagnosing and revealing institutional performance through AdvancED Accreditation. Leadership Capacity (Standards 1 and 2); Teaching and Learning Impact (Standards 3 and 5); and Resource Utilization (Standard 4) combined to provide themes that were directly related to student success and organizational effectiveness.

Continuous improvement, a culture of family and student achievement and a commitment to autonomy with respect to leadership all punctuated the Team's deliberations. The mean average of scores for indicators 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4 was 2.74/4.0 and those scores were above the AdvancED Network Average by a mean of .03. It was that notion of family, shared by many stakeholders and staff, that undergirded Governance and Leadership (Standards 1 & 2). The system currently enjoys support from stakeholders and there was a level of trust for system and school leadership. That trust manifested itself in an average score of 2.65 for Standard 1, and a 3.4 for Standard 2.

Overall, the Team developed a "review theme" they shared with the system and the Board of Education. The team felt the system was "a personal and caring school system dedicated to excellence, energized by the notion of family, and committed to the success of each student through the building of bridges to their future."

The Ouachita Parish School System and its schools were introduced to a new system logo and vision/ mission statements during the External Review. They were studied prior to the Team's arrival, and their first release coincided with the External Review. The system hired a new superintendent in July of 2015 and he assembled the review process and undergirded his goals and ideas for the future of the system. One staff member stated, "It was time for a new direction and vision. I like it!"

Several challenges were noted in the system's self-assessment. There was a need for collaboration between and among all schools in the parish. The desire to discover new challenges and work together to solve them and become one helped solidify the new vision and mission. The system also identified the need to disseminate information among schools in a timely and pertinent manner. The need to use ever increasing social media for communication and the expansion of new teacher initiatives between local universities concluded the outlined areas of need and were a focus of the review (Self-Assessment, P. 18).

The Team identified Indicator 1.4 as part of an Opportunity for Improvement. In conjunction with Indicators 5.2 and 5.4, the Team felt the need to develop a system-wide procedure that would provide a continuous improvement process for collecting, analyzing and applying learning from multiple sources that provide clear direction and support for student learning. That recommendation was framed from the notion that a system-wide procedure that tasks the periodic review of the system's vision and mission should include the review of assessment metrics and the nexus to student learning.

The Team was greeted with a new system logo, revised new system vision and mission statements and a new superintendent as of July, 2015. The review process provided a "bridge" for multiple system initiatives and

issues that would help students enter the world ready for postsecondary education or the workforce (System Self-Assessment, p.15). However, team members noted the review of the system's purpose had not occurred in several years. In fact, one review committee member stated the old logo and system vision and mission statements were good "in its (sic) time." (Self-Assessment, P.15). The Team was not able to locate any formal procedure or policy that tasked the system to review its system-wide purpose on a regular schedule and include multiple stakeholders in the process.

Stakeholder interviews provided a positive response to the new logo and vision/mission statements. Yet, the Team was unable to interview any stakeholder that served on the review committee. In fact, many of the stakeholders had not seen the new statements or logo. That, however, was intended so the new material could be launched just before the AdvancED review (Self-Assessment, p.15).

Standard 2 also reflected a governance and leadership model that was productive and growing in effectiveness. In support of system purpose and direction and its commitment to shared leadership, the Team scored Indicator 2.3 with a perfect 4.0 and issued a Powerful Practice. Indicator 2.4 was scored with a 3.50 and also strengthened the Powerful Practice with the notion of culture and commitment. One stakeholder stated, "The system is excited about their future and they allow us [schools] to design our future with them."

The Team found a seven-member board of education dedicated to the support of student performance and system effectiveness. Fiscal accountability, professional development and collaboration with all staff have provided a framework for the integration of autonomy and the system mission between and among all schools and leaders.

System leadership has secured numerous research-based grants to fund innovative educational programs. Those programs were "birthed" based on the board's belief that leadership should have the freedom and trust to lead success. Literacy Design Collaborative, Math Design Collaborative, National Math and Science Initiative and the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching helped pedagogical research, student engagement and informed instruction to lead the process of success. One teacher stated with a smile, "I love teaching here. We are encouraged to expand and get better."

Ouachita Parish is in the fourth year of implementing a teacher leader training and support initiative in partnership with the Louisiana Department of Education. That initiative has expanded to include a classroom teacher leader and a curriculum support representative for every school in the system and has been funded by Title II for travel and teacher release time.

Teaching and learning (Standards 3 & 5) combined to include 17 Indicators and produced a mean score of 2.79 for Standard 3 and a 2.67 for Standard 5. Together, the Team integrated eleot™ scores, artifacts and interviews and produced a 289.88 for the IEQ score in Teaching and Learning Impact. That score was 20.94 above the AdvancED Network Average (AEN).

The Team initially reviewed the curriculum and its alignment to assessment and the scope and sequence for teaching. The system had in place a very robust plan for writing for literacy. Further, team members



discovered evidence of a teacher leader program, Thinking Maps and a plethora of other strategies in place. District-created benchmarks are reviewed three times per year. Additionally, district formative assessments are administered at the end of teaching units.

Curriculum monitoring was also facilitated by best practice cluster meetings and professional development calendars that provided ongoing professional development. Class observations and walk-through observations were in place to assist teachers on an ongoing basis. Finally, principal fellowship meetings, partnerships and student support services were in place to assist with the implementation of the curricula.

The use and interpretation of data in a significant manner, benchmarks curriculum changes, pedagogical variances and the interlock between teaching and student outcomes. The Team was able to review various professional development initiatives throughout the system that supported data interpretation and analysis; however, team members were not able to find a system-wide process that informed staff on the collection of data.

The Team felt there was a significant need for a system-wide procedure that would establish a continuous program of professional learning that included the interpretation and use of data (Indicators, 3.11, 5.3). Further, since the system uses EAGLE, professional learning would be beneficial to the use of formative assessments and their application to the metrics of teaching. The Team noted the system, structured by learning communities, met to study data to establish writing goals. Those same learning teams functioned at the system level as well. One teacher stated, "We just need to work on a system-wide level with respect to data and its usage."

The Team also issued an Opportunity for Improvement (Indicators, 1.4, 5.2, 5.4) which suggested the implementation of a continuous improvement process for collecting, analyzing and applying learning from multiple data sources. This opportunity was a crosswalk with Indicators 3.11 and 5.3. It suggested that multiple sources of data be used to provide direction. Further, in conjunction with the entire system's continuous improvement process, the data that are used should integrate and help direct the review of the system's continuous improvement process.

Eleot scores also suggested the need for a system-wide process of professional development to assist in the use and interpretation of data. The eleot™ environments of Equitable Learning, High Expectations and Active Learning produced scores of 2.67, 2.77 and 2.90 respectively. Those scores were all below the AEN (AdvancED Network) averages. Even though classrooms across the system reflected exceptional levels within the Well-Managed Learning Environment, the development of a system-wide policy that would provide direction for improved instruction through the use of data would intensify eleot™ results. One teacher stated, "We continue to work on how the test results impact our teaching-and what we need to do for our students."

The system has an intense focus on the student. The system's self-assessment and stakeholder surveys indicated that services are in place at the system and school levels to provide for student needs including health, counseling and career guidance. Further, school visits by team members indicated that students have the opportunity to participate in organizations that build relationships with staff and other students.

Ouachita Parish School System has in place a very caring, family oriented culture. One parent stated, "This district is our family. We know they [teachers] care." Numerous intervention programs are in place to provide needed services to students. While each school, in one manner or another, has a process for child advocacy, the Team was not able to find a system-wide procedure designed to assign one adult to each child. A majority of school principals and parents indicated during interviews there was no formal structure in place to ensure that each student is well known by at least one adult advocate who supports the student's educational experience. Furthermore, survey results during two consecutive school years (2014-15 and 2015-16) indicated that middle and high school students ranked the statement, "My school makes sure there is at least one adult who knows me well and ensures interest in my education and future," as the lowest among all survey respondents. The Team issued an Improvement Priority (Indicator 3.9) enjoining the development of a system-wide structure 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.

Eleot™ scores also undergirded the system's commitment to its students. Supportive Learning (C) had a mean of 3.16/4.00. Item C (4) showed that 97% of the team found teacher support and assistance for the student's learning as either very evident or evident. The schools are well postured to design a system wide process for student advocacy and build on the strong sense of caring and support already present. One student stated, "My teachers care every day."

That caring nature is reflected in the system's commitment to safe schools. Standard 4 embraces the notion that resources must be aligned and supportive of the needs of the institution and the students served. The Team found a very safe, clean and well maintained system. Each campus reflected care and attention to detail.

The system has implemented three-year facility, emergency, and crisis management plans that ensure the safety of students, staff and visitors on school campuses. All schools have been equipped with cameras and Key access systems and school resource officers have been hired and integrated into building staffs. One parent with multiple children in the system stated, "What impressed me is the fact that both my children told me that seeing the School Resource Officer in their school building made them feel safe."

The Team found excellent collaboration with the surrounding law enforcement agencies. Lock down drills were practiced periodically and building security and barrier designed entrances all added to the notion of safety and security for every student. As a result, the Team issued a Powerful Practice (Indicator 4.3) honoring the system for its strong commitment to safety and the maintenance of a healthy and clean environment.

The Team scored Indicator 4.2 with a 3.38/4.00 and felt the system had made a strong commitment to instructional time and fiscal resource management. The Team also found the system focused instructional time and material and fiscal resources on supporting the purpose and direction of the system, its schools, educational programs and system operations. Stakeholder interviews confirmed that individual schools fiercely protected instructional time. Parents stated "commitment to education as a major strength."

Eleot™ results showed that the Well Managed Learning Environment was scored at a 3.31. That was above the AEN average of 3.14. System surveys also showed a very nice result with respect to Standard 4. A mean of 4.136 was scored using the results from the student, parent and staff surveys. Those results continued to suggest the system and school leaders work to protect instructional time.

Eleot™ scores supported the protection of instructional time and the management of the learning environment. Interestingly, that commitment also included the use of various informational resources used to support student learning. The Team found the need to strengthen the coordination among and between certified and support staff as related to information resources. The scope of information resources reviewed included infrastructure, digital resources, technology and educational programs throughout the system.

From Eleot™ results, the Team scored Digital Learning (G) at 1.49. That score was below the AdvancED Network Average of 1.83. The score indicated that while technology and digital instructional protocols may have been available, the use by the students was somewhat limited. One staff member stated, "Our students need to know how to find information, and additional support is needed." One system administrator stated "We have nine uncertified librarians in the system and the use of information resources is a weakness for our students."

The Team issued an Improvement Priority for standard 4.5. The need to develop and implement a systematic procedure that provides, coordinates and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system is needed. While the IEQ results indicated a Resource Utilization score of 310.94, the Team found the need to establish a system-wide policy for Indicator 4.5.

The Team scored Standard 4 with a mean of 3.11. That score reflected the strong commitment on behalf of the Board of Education, leadership and staff to resource management, safety and security, instructional time and the recruitment and retention of qualified staff. Standard 4 has eight indicators and all but one Indicator was above the AdvancED Network average. One administrator stated, "We work hard to protect our resources and provide the very best for our students. It is our focus."

The Ouachita Parish School System has worked hard to improve, establish fiscal balance and assimilate the new Louisiana State Assessment protocols. The work on accountability, assessment, data and differentiated instruction has begun to grow and add to the instructional strategies of the system. Further, eleot™ provided significant support for the system's direction and mission with respect to the scores and their link to the Standards.

The focus on professional development, data analysis and use and a robust commitment toward literacy is well underway. The desire to move the system to an "A" district on the state report card is evident and a large part of its new vision and mission. The system has also embraced the AdvancED process and has incorporated that process into its operational footprint.

School safety and the health and welfare of every child is highly protected. In fact, safe schools have been identified as a "Top Priority." Respondent surveys reflected that satisfaction. One parent stated, "I know my children are safe. And that is a wonderful feeling."

The improvement of the student assessment index for grades 3-8 by 3.1 points by targeting the assessment index in grades 3-8 is part of the system's action plan. Further, the desire to improve student achievement by 3.1 points by targeting the Dropout/Credit Accumulation Index (DCAI), the End of Course (EOC) index, ACT/Workkeys Index and the Cohort Graduation Rate Index is well underway.

Finally, the system, continues to balance its fiscal needs with the two distinct funding platforms found in the system. The emphasis continues to task the use of Title monies, grants, and collaborative programs.

The Ouachita Parish School System is well postured to continue to develop policies and procedures that will help provide a consistent and robust process for all of their initiatives and challenges. The system has found a vital link between student achievement, organizational vision and mission and the improvement of student outcomes. Using the AdvancED Report of the External Review Team, the system can engage in a process for the next five years that will provide measured success and increased student results.

The AdvancED External Review Team found a natural connection between its final scores for all Indicators and its Improvement Priorities. In many cases, the Team found similar challenges and successes as did the system in its self-assessment. A true "servant leadership" atmosphere does exist with the board, superintendent and central office. The continued strength of the staff and the incredible support of the community will always lend support for the overall goal of student achievement and success.

Using the work that Ouachita Parish School System has already begun, under the new leadership and direction, the incredible and powerful notion of "family," and passion for its students, the system should be able to engage and significantly complete the AdvancED Team's Improvement Priorities, monitor progress of all students and significantly impact the opportunities for all children in the 21st century.

## Improvement Priorities

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

- Develop and implement a structure 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.
- Develop and implement a systematic procedure that provides, coordinates and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system.
- Develop and implement a systemic process to review, revise and communicate a system-wide purpose for student success.
- Develop, document and implement a system wide procedure that establishes a continuous program of professional learning that includes the interpretation and use of data that provide for a system wide

purpose of student success.

# Accreditation Recommendation

## Index of Education Quality

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

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

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

	External Review IEQ Score	AdvancED Network Average
Overall Score	300.30	278.34
Teaching and Learning Impact	289.88	268.94
Leadership Capacity	311.46	292.64
Resource Utilization	310.94	283.23

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

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

# Addenda

## Individual Institution Results (Self-reported)

Institution Name	Teaching and Learning Impact	Leadership Capacity	Resource Utilization	Overall IEQ Score
Boley Elementary School	304.76	309.09	285.71	302.56
Calhoun Elementary School	319.05	363.64	314.29	330.77
Calhoun Middle School	300.00	309.09	300.00	302.56
Central Elementary School	376.19	345.45	328.57	358.97
Claiborne Elementary School	290.48	318.18	300.00	300.00
Crosley Elementary School	319.05	372.73	300.00	330.77
Drew Elementary School	366.67	336.36	357.14	356.41
George W. Welch Elementary School	395.24	372.73	400.00	389.74
Good Hope Middle School	304.76	309.09	271.43	300.00
Highland Elementary School	309.52	363.64	300.00	323.08
Jack Hayes Elementary School	309.52	336.36	300.00	315.38
Kiroli Elementary School	290.48	309.09	271.43	292.31
Lakeshore Elementary School	328.95	330.00	271.43	318.06
Lenwil Elementary School	323.81	336.36	314.29	325.64
Ouachita Parish High School	285.71	309.09	285.71	292.31
Ouachita Parish Jr. High School	300.00	309.09	300.00	302.56
Pinecrest Elementary/Middle School	300.00	309.09	285.71	300.00
Richwood High School	314.29	354.55	300.00	323.08
Richwood Junior High School	261.90	263.64	257.14	261.54
Riser Elementary School	323.81	318.18	314.29	320.51
Riser Middle School	252.38	309.09	228.57	264.10
Riverbend Elementary School	333.33	336.36	371.43	341.03
Robinson Elementary School	314.29	300.00	300.00	307.69
Shady Grove Elementary School	285.71	363.64	300.00	310.26

Institution Name	Teaching and Learning Impact	Leadership Capacity	Resource Utilization	Overall IEQ Score
Sterlington Elementary	371.43	372.73	357.14	369.23
Sterlington High School	333.33	345.45	357.14	341.03
Sterlington Middle School	314.29	327.27	357.14	325.64
Swartz Lower Elementary School	314.29	345.45	285.71	317.95
Swartz Upper Elementary School	385.71	381.82	385.71	384.62
Swayze Elementary School	328.57	336.36	271.43	320.51
West Monroe High School	252.38	309.09	314.29	279.49
West Ouachita High School	285.71	336.36	328.57	307.69
West Ridge Middle School	323.81	336.36	357.14	333.33
Woodlawn Elementary School	366.67	345.45	357.14	358.97
Woodlawn Junior High School	309.52	309.09	314.29	310.26



# Team Roster

Member	Brief Biography
Dr. Steve Oborn	<p>Dr. Steve Oborn is a retired superintendent and college professor. He currently owns and operates his own consulting firm in Georgetown, Ohio. His educational career has spanned over 44 years, and he served as a public school superintendent for 23 years. Dr. Oborn earned his Bachelor of Arts degree from Capital University, his Master of Arts Degree from The Ohio State University, and his Doctor of Philosophy Degree from The University of Dayton with a concentration in educational leadership and organizational dynamics. Dr. Oborn has published numerous articles and presented at numerous conferences with a focus on teacher as researcher and organizational design. He is completing a book titled, "Build a new school: The education of the whole child," and a school board training platform, "Changing complex to simple: Governing dynamics for boards of education-The power of the Starr Initiative©." Dr. Oborn has served as a Lead Evaluator for AdvancED for over four years, and leads teams nationally and internationally. He has been associated with North Central Association for over 40 years, serving Ohio as an Ambassador and Lead Evaluator.</p>
Dr. Nancy P Autin	<p>Dr. Nancy Autin is an Assistant Professor at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in Educational Foundations and Leadership. Her undergraduate degree is in Mathematics, masters in Curriculum and Instruction with a concentration in Mathematics, and Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of New Orleans. Prior to joining the faculty at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Dr. Autin served as a high school principal, academic assistant principal, curriculum director, supervisor of instruction, mathematics department chair, and mathematics teacher. She taught courses ranging from Algebra I to AP Calculus. Prior to moving to Lafayette, LA, she also taught Secondary Mathematics Methods at the University of New Orleans. Dr. Autin's involvement in the accreditation process spans many years; it includes serving as an Internal Facilitator to schools, working as a QAR Team member, and serving as Lead Evaluator for External Review Teams.</p>
Mr. William B Rivenbark	<p>William B. (Bill) Rivenbark is a retired North Carolina public school educator. He worked his entire career of 40 years with the Craven County (NC) School District, having served as teacher, assistant principal, principal, elementary supervisor, assistant superintendent, associate superintendent and superintendent. Earned credentials include B.S., M.A.Ed., and Ed.S. degrees from East Carolina University. After retiring, Mr. Rivenbark was appointed to a nine month term as interim superintendent for a neighboring North Carolina school district. He has served two terms on the SACS CASI North Carolina Council and currently is an AdvancED Lead Evaluator as well as a North Carolina Field Consultant for AdvancED. In the spring of 2008, Mr. Rivenbark published an article in The AdvancED Source entitled "Craven County Schools' Approach to Systems Thinking (A Natural Fit with the AdvancED Accreditation Process)."</p>
Mrs. Pamela Goodwin	<p>Pamela Goodwin now serves as Director of Accountability and School Improvement in Greenville Public School District. She has worked as a Director of State and Federal Programs, District Math Specialist, principal, assistant principal, an education reform restructuring facilitator, classroom teacher of elementary, middle, high school settings and at a community college. In the state of Mississippi, she serves as a state council member for AdvancED.</p>

Member	Brief Biography
<p>Mr. Kenneth W Pennington</p>	<p>Kenny is a 1978 graduate of Hamburg High School in Hamburg, Arkansas. In 1983, he graduated from the University of Arkansas at Monticello where he received a Bachelor of Science in Education Degree with a major in Coaching, Health and Physical Education with a minor in Social Studies. Currently, Kenny has a MSE degree form Henderson State University and has served in public education for 28 and 1/2 years, 13 in the Hampton School District and 15 in the Monticello School District and where he first started a half year at Hamburg High School. All of these institutions are located in south Arkansas. Throughout his career, Kenny has been a classroom teacher, coach, elementary principal, assistant high school principal, and high school principal. He has served on the Arkansas Association of Secondary School Principals Board as secretary, president-elect, president, and past president. Kenny has served on the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators Board as secretary, president elect, and president, and past president. Serving on these boards has given Kenny many opportunities to serve on various committees in order to assist in the development of policy. Other committees that Kenny served on include; Grades 3-8 Growth Model, Algebra I cut-scores for graduation requirements, Instructional Facilitators job description, and the Principal Evaluation component in Arkansas.</p> <p>Kenny is married to Brenda Pennington, a teacher, and they have three children. Our family is very active with our children's hobbies, such as, Taekwondo, dance, baseball, gymnastics, and cheer.</p> <p>Currently, Kenny serves as the AdvancED Arkansas State Director.</p>
<p>Ms. Stephanie Procell Rogers</p>	<p>After graduating with my Bachelor's of Arts in Education from McNeese State University in May 1988 I began my career in education that August with the Calcasieu Parish School Board at Moss Bluff Middle School teaching 6th and 7th grade English/Language Arts. After teaching one year at the middle school level I spent the next fourteen years teaching English II, III, IV and Publications in at South Cameron High School with the Cameron Parish School Board. After earning my Specialist Degree in Administration and Supervision in May 2003 I was hired as the assistant principal at Johnson's Bayou High School. I served in this position from June 2003 until January 2004 before accepting a position as a School Improvement Coordinator with the Louisiana State Department of Education (LDOE). During my employment with the LDOE I worked in several capacities with the majority of my work focusing on high school issues. My final job title with the LDOE was High School Redesign Coordinator. In April 2012 I accepted a position with Calcasieu Parish School Board as the librarian at Iowa High School before being named the assistant principal of curriculum at Sam Houston High School in July 2013. In November 2014 I accepted my current position of Cameron Parish School Board Supervisor of 6-12 Curriculum, Career and Technical Education, Child Welfare and Attendance and Title I.</p>
<p>Mrs. Sallie Ann Sutherland</p>	<p>Sallie Sutherland taught grades kindergarten through twelfth, and all subjects Reading, math, science, social studies, and multiple special education classes. She earned a Bachelor's in Science in Vocational Home Economics in 1978, and a M. Ed. in special education in the 90's. Sallie completed the course work for a Reading Specialist but did not add it to her certificate. She also has a plus thirty, and an additional 60 hours above that. She served as principal for summer school for three years. Sallie is currently enrolled in a class at Louisiana Tech for SACS.</p>

Member	Brief Biography
Roger Vance	Lifelong resident of Shreveport/Bossier City Married 25 years, 4 children ages 12-20 1986 Graduate of C.E. Byrd High School, Shreveport, LA 1991 Graduate of Louisiana Tech University (B.S., Mathematics Education) 1990's -- Taught Mathematics at C.E. Byrd High School 2000's -- Math Specialist and District Math Instructional Coach 2008 Graduate of LSU-Shreveport (M.Ed., Educational Supervision and Administration) 2010's -- Taught Mathematics at Cope Middle School Since 2014 -- Secondary Math Curriculum Specialist for Caddo Schools
Mr. Russell Lee Vernon	Mr. Vernon have been in education for 18 years. He received his Bachelors of Science degree from East Carolina University in Middle School Education for Science and Social Studies, Masters in School Administration from Appalachian State University, and currently he is enrolled at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro working on his EdS and EdD. Russell is an elementary school Principal in Madison, North Carolina. He has participated in AdvancED visits for the last nine years. In the state of North Carolina, he serves as a State Council Member, Lead Evaluator, and he has served as a team member for school and district visits across the United States.

## Next Steps

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

## About AdvancED

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

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

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

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