Report of the
External Review Team
for
Cherokee County School System

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Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Use of Diagnostic Tools

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

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

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

Index of Education Quality

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

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

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

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

Benchmark Data

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

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

Powerful Practices

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

Opportunities for Improvement

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

Improvement Priorities

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

The Review

A team of nine educators arrived in Canton, Georgia to engage in the External Review process (January 29-February 1, 2017) for Cherokee County School District (CCSD). Four team members were from out of state while five team members were from Georgia. The nine team members collectively had 229 years of experience in public education. In preparation for this onsite system-wide review, the Lead Evaluator made personal phone calls and sent emails to greet team members. Additionally, a conference call was scheduled on January 5 with all team members. During this conference call, team member expectations were reviewed, logistical planning conducted, and questions from all team members answered. Additional phone calls and emails between the Lead Evaluator and team members helped to better prepare everyone for the onsite review, especially team members new to the process.

The Lead Evaluator was in constant communication with the system contact through phone calls, emails, and texts. The contact was very organized in preparation for the review and responded quickly and efficiently to any and all requests made by the Lead Evaluator. In preparation for the review, each team member reviewed the Accreditation Report for the system, the school reports, and the school system's website. Team members had primary responsibility for focusing on one specific Standard but were also responsible for being familiar with all Standards and Indicators. One team member had sole responsibility for the Early Learning Standards

since the school system had a stand alone preschool program.

On Sunday afternoon, the team met at the hotel prior to traveling together to a middle school that had been recently renovated and had state-of-the-art technology equipment. At this school facility, the superintendent gave his overview of the school system followed by a dinner with his Cabinet members and the External Review Team. Following that, the team returned to the workroom at the hotel for an orientation session. Each team member attended this opening Sunday evening session with an initial rating of all Indicators. The orientation was held where team members reviewed their preparation work with the entire team, shared their initial ratings of Indicators, and finalized planning details for the first day of the onsite review. The system contact provided for each team member an electronic link that contained evidence related to each Standard and other accompanying artifacts to rate the school system with respect to each of the Indicators. Folders with school schedules and a list of stakeholders to be interviewed each day were also provided.

Monday was spent at the central office. The chairs of the five Standards committees presented overviews of the Standards. Interviews were then held with the superintendent, the chairs of the five Standards committees, district leadership, parents, community members, board members, support staff, and the principals and leadership teams from the schools not being visited.

On Tuesday, eight of the 41 schools, as well as the preschool site, were visited. The eight schools included four elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools. The 41 schools and centers are aligned in six Innovation Zones (feeder elementary, middle with the appropriate high school). Schools selected for visits represented the various Innovation Zones. Eighty-two classroom observations were conducted across the school system in classes from kindergarten through grade twelve. In addition, eight observations were conducted at the preschool site. Principals, teachers, and students were interviewed at each school that was visited.

The External Review Team thanks the school system and all of the staff who prepared for the External Review. The system contact worked very closely with the Lead Evaluator as the schedule was prepared. The system put together all artifacts and evidence and provided it to the team through an electronic link organized by Standards and Indicators.

Throughout the review, school system personnel were open and transparent. Team members were welcomed into classrooms in all schools and at the pre-school program site. The faculty and staff provided valuable insight through interviews.

To prepare for the system review, the school system conducted surveys of parents, students and staff. All required AdvancED questionnaires were used by the institution to receive stakeholder feedback. The minimum response rate for each population was met (parent questionnaire: equal to or greater than 20 percent, student questionnaire equal to or greater than 40 percent, and staff questionnaire equal to or greater than 60 percent).

Results of stakeholder feedback collected by the school system were acceptably analyzed and presented with reasonable clarity. All Standard ratings for all stakeholders were in the range of 3.94 - 4.70 on a 5.0 scale.

Each school conducted a self assessment, as well as the system completing its system-wide self assessment. There were parent representatives who served on each Standard's committee in the self-assessment process.

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	7
Administrators	106
Instructional Staff	116
Support Staff	58
Students	174
Parents/Community/Business Leaders	73
Total	**535**

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	2.69
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.	2.75	2.49
3.3	Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	3.00	2.59
3.4	System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	2.88	2.71
3.5	The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.	3.00	2.58
3.6	Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning.	2.25	2.48
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	3.12	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.	3.50	2.97
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.	2.38	2.50
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.	2.62	2.47
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	3.00	2.65
3.12	The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	3.00	2.64

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.	2.38	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.	2.75	2.49
5.3	Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.	2.38	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.	2.75	2.50
5.5	System and school leaders monitor and communicate comprehensive information about student learning, school performance, and the achievement of system and school improvement goals to stakeholders.	3.12	2.75

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	3.00	3.33
Test Administration	4.00	3.52
Equity of Learning	3.00	2.54
Quality of Learning	3.00	2.96

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.
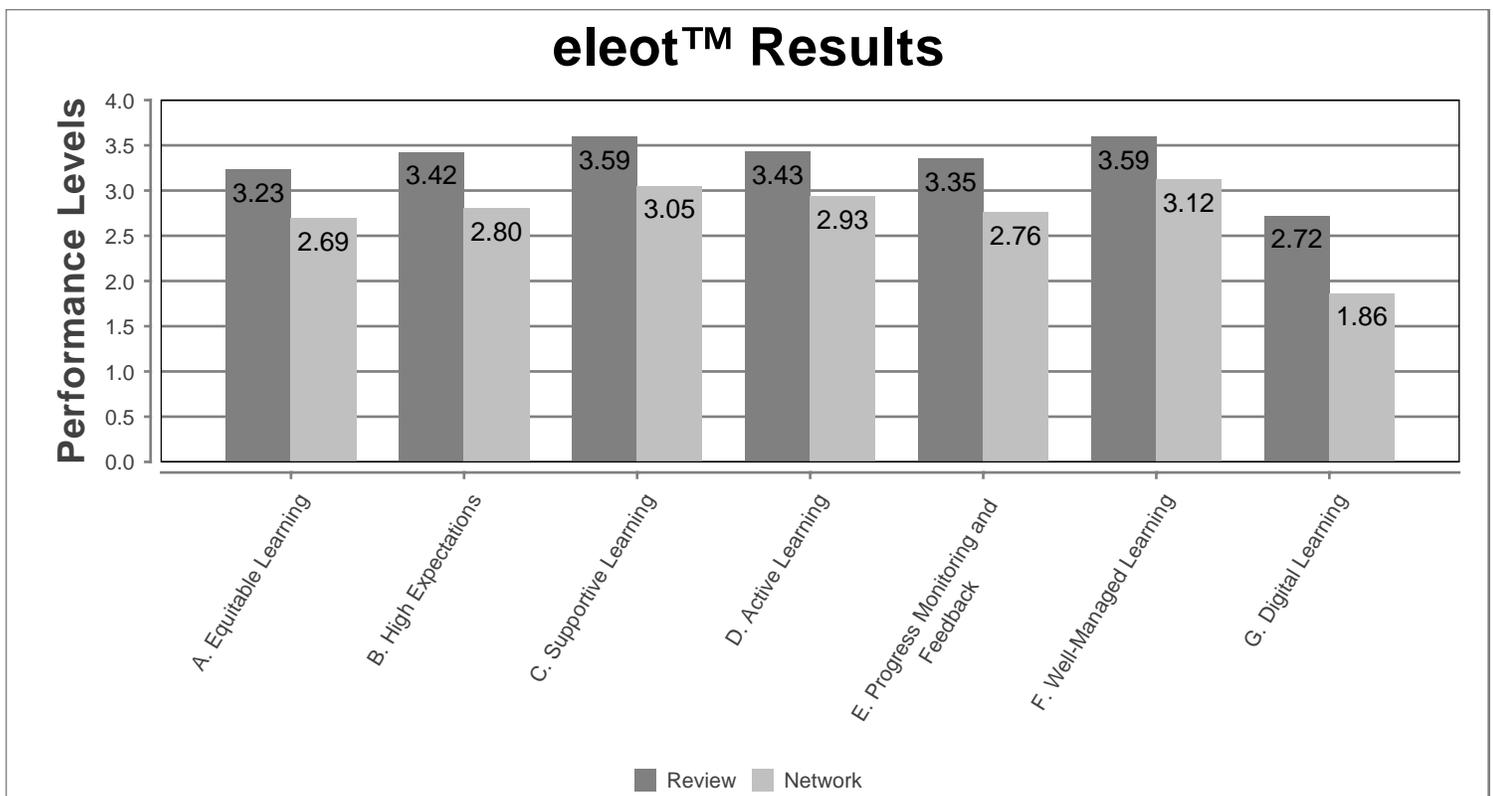
The External Review Team completed 82 observations using the eleot™ tool in eight of the system's schools (elementary, middle, and high school levels). Observations included mathematics, science, social studies, English/Language Arts, and elective classes. Plus, eight pre-kindergarten classrooms were visited at the the pre-school program site. The average ratings for all seven of the learning environments were above the AdvancED Network (AEN) averages. The Well-Managed Learning Environment (3.59 compared to AEN of

3.12) and the Supportive Learning Environment (3.59 compared to AEN of 3.05) were the highest rated environments. The Active Learning Environment was the second highest rated environment with a rating of 3.43 compared to the AEN average of 2.93. High Expectations Environment was rated next highest at 3.42 compared to the AEN average of 2.80. Other highly rated environments were the Progress Monitoring Environment at 3.35 compared to the AEN average of 2.76 and the Equitable Learning Environment at 3.23 compared to the AEN of 2.69. Although above the network average, the lowest rated environment was Digital Learning rated at 2.72 compared to the AEN average of 1.86.

In the Well-Managed Learning Environment, team members observed students who spoke and interacted respectfully with their teacher and their peers. They followed classroom rules and worked well with others. It was obvious that students knew classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences. Transitions were made smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another.

The Supportive Learning Environment was evident as students demonstrated positive attitudes about the classroom and learning. Students took risks in learning without fear of negative feedback. Support and assistance were frequently provided so that students understood the content and could accomplish the learning tasks.

With the Active Learning Environment, students were actively engaged in applicable learning activities and had numerous opportunities to engage in discussions with teachers and other students. They also made connections from the content being taught to real-life experiences.

In the High Expectations Environment, students strived to meet the high expectations established by the teacher and engaged in rigorous coursework and discussions. Most students were tasked with activities and learning that were challenging but within their reach. Students responded to questioning that required higher order thinking as they justified answers, explained why a particular skill was important, applied new learning, and evaluated and synthesized information.

In terms of the Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment, students were asked about their individual progress, responded to teacher feedback to improve their understanding, and had multiple opportunities to revise and improve their work based on feedback. In most classrooms, students understood how their work was to be assessed. Yet, this is an area for growth in progress monitoring as all students did not know exactly how their work was to be assessed.

For the Equitable Learning Environment, there were opportunities for differentiated learning for students. Students also had equal access to classroom discussions, activities, and support. They knew that rules and consequences were fair, clear, and consistently applied. The lowest area of Equitable Learning was the provision of opportunities for students to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/differences.

The Digital Learning Environment with a rating of 2.72 was rated lower than all other environments, yet it was still above the network average. In approximately 68 percent of the classroom observations, students were effectively using digital tools for learning. Students were observed using digital tools/technology to gather,

evaluate and/or use information for learning. Students were also observed using technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning. Digital tools were also being used by students to communicate and work collaboratively for learning.

When reflecting on the observations at the various schools, there was not any one school in which technology usage by students was highest. Students in some of the mathematics classes were using calculators. In a limited number of classes, small groups of students were using computers for remediation and reinforcement of a particular skill. These eleot™ findings are aligned to and support the Standards and Indicators. In Standard Three on Teaching and Assessing for Learning, the evidence supports the rating on Indicators 3.1 and 3.3 on teachers engaging students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations. The strong rating for the Well-Managed Learning Environment aligns to these Indicators as students transitioned smoothly from one activity to another and collaborated with other students during student-centered activities. The rating on the Active Learning Environment also supports the ratings on Indicators 3.1 and 3.3 as students had several opportunities to engage in discussions with the teacher and other students and were actively engaged in the learning activities. The ratings on the High Expectations Environment are aligned to the ratings on Indicators 3.1, 3.3,and 3.5. Opportunities for differentiation of instruction, the provision of exemplars of high quality work, and questioning that required higher order thinking were observed during the 82 classroom observations.

Even though Digital Learning was rated as the lowest of the seven environments, it was still far above the network average and can be aligned to the strong rating on Indicator 4.6 regarding the provision of technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching and learning needs, as well as to Indicator 3.3 on using technology as an instructional resource and a learning tool. The system is continually administering needs assessments and using the resulting data to develop and implement technology plans to improve technology services, infrastructure, and equipment.

Quality teaching is the heart of the instructional program. Focusing on the information provided from the classroom observations on the seven learning environments and the actions recommended will assist the school system in moving forward in addressing the Improvement Priority outlined in this report.

eleot™ Data Summary

A. Equitable Learning			%			
Item	**Average**	**Description**	**Very Evident**	**Evident**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Not Observed**
1.	3.11	Has differentiated learning opportunities and activities that meet her/his needs	47.56%	25.61%	17.07%	9.76%
2.	3.60	Has equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	62.20%	35.37%	2.44%	0.00%
3.	3.59	Knows that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied	59.76%	39.02%	1.22%	0.00%
4.	2.62	Has ongoing opportunities to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/differences	21.95%	39.02%	18.29%	20.73%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.23						

B. High Expectations			%			
Item	**Average**	**Description**	**Very Evident**	**Evident**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Not Observed**
1.	3.67	Knows and strives to meet the high expectations established by the teacher	69.51%	28.05%	2.44%	0.00%
2.	3.65	Is tasked with activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	68.29%	28.05%	3.66%	0.00%
3.	2.87	Is provided exemplars of high quality work	30.49%	41.46%	12.20%	15.85%
4.	3.57	Is engaged in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks	62.20%	32.93%	4.88%	0.00%
5.	3.34	Is asked and responds to questions that require higher order thinking (e.g., applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	50.00%	35.37%	13.41%	1.22%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.42						

C. Supportive Learning			%			
Item	**Average**	**Description**	**Very Evident**	**Evident**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Not Observed**
1.	3.65	Demonstrates or expresses that learning experiences are positive	65.85%	32.93%	1.22%	0.00%
2.	3.73	Demonstrates positive attitude about the classroom and learning	73.17%	26.83%	0.00%	0.00%
3.	3.63	Takes risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	64.63%	34.15%	1.22%	0.00%
4.	3.68	Is provided support and assistance to understand content and accomplish tasks	70.73%	26.83%	2.44%	0.00%
5.	3.24	Is provided additional/alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level of challenge for her/his needs	48.78%	35.37%	7.32%	8.54%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.59						

D. Active Learning			%			
Item	**Average**	**Description**	**Very Evident**	**Evident**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Not Observed**
1.	3.52	Has several opportunities to engage in discussions with teacher and other students	62.20%	28.05%	9.76%	0.00%
2.	3.05	Makes connections from content to real-life experiences	39.02%	37.80%	12.20%	10.98%
3.	3.71	Is actively engaged in the learning activities	73.17%	24.39%	2.44%	0.00%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.43						

E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback			%			
Item	**Average**	**Description**	**Very Evident**	**Evident**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Not Observed**
1.	3.34	Is asked and/or quizzed about individual progress/learning	51.22%	36.59%	7.32%	4.88%
2.	3.46	Responds to teacher feedback to improve understanding	52.44%	41.46%	6.10%	0.00%
3.	3.59	Demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of the lesson/content	64.63%	30.49%	3.66%	1.22%
4.	3.06	Understands how her/his work is assessed	31.71%	51.22%	8.54%	8.54%
5.	3.32	Has opportunities to revise/improve work based on feedback	51.22%	34.15%	9.76%	4.88%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.35						

F. Well-Managed Learning			%			
Item	**Average**	**Description**	**Very Evident**	**Evident**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Not Observed**
1.	3.71	Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers	71.95%	26.83%	1.22%	0.00%
2.	3.73	Follows classroom rules and works well with others	75.61%	23.17%	0.00%	1.22%
3.	3.48	Transitions smoothly and efficiently to activities	57.32%	36.59%	2.44%	3.66%
4.	3.27	Collaborates with other students during student-centered activities	51.22%	32.93%	7.32%	8.54%
5.	3.74	Knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences	74.39%	25.61%	0.00%	0.00%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.59						

G. Digital Learning			%			
Item	**Average**	**Description**	**Very Evident**	**Evident**	**Somewhat Evident**	**Not Observed**
1.	2.95	Uses digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	45.12%	28.05%	3.66%	23.17%
2.	2.73	Uses digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	41.46%	19.51%	9.76%	29.27%
3.	2.48	Uses digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning	37.80%	10.98%	12.20%	39.02%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.72						

Findings

Improvement Priority

Fully implement the Instructional Framework initiative in order to refine and enhance the instructional process used by teachers to systematically support quality student learning across all classrooms in the school system.

(Indicator 3.2, Indicator 3.6, Indicator 5.1, SP1. Assessment Quality)

Primary Indicator
Indicator 3.2

Evidence and Rationale

Interviews with 106 administrators and 116 teachers revealed the system is in the beginning stages of launching an Instructional Framework initiative. The Instructional Framework outlines the system's best practices regarding teaching and learning and consists of four domains (Design, Instruct, Assess, and Reflect) and ten fundamental concepts that support its four year implementation. As noted in the Accreditation Report and in numerous interviews, this initiative was developed in 2016 and launched in January of 2017 to provide a cycle of professional instruction for all educators in Cherokee County School System.

The Student Performance Diagnostic revealed an achievement gap between English Language Learners and other student groups at the high school level, as well as discrepancies in graduation rates among subgroups and schools. Graduation data reflects a 17 percent difference among high schools in Cherokee County, ranging from 74.1 percent at Cherokee High School to 91.1 percent at River Ridge High School. Discrepancies between student subgroups are revealed in such statistics as graduation rate for Hispanic students at 78.1 percent compared to that for Asian/Pacific Islander students at 94 percent and White graduation rate at 86.3

percent. This data analysis indicates a need for a cohesive set of expectations for performance and learning across all classrooms in the system.

In his interview, the superintendent communicated that implementing the recently adopted Instructional Framework was needed to ensure system-wide consistency, quality, and fidelity of classroom instruction and student assessments.The superintendent acknowledged the system's dependence on its talented teachers but recognized the need for systematized instructional practices.

Interviews with internal stakeholders, including teachers and administrators, revealed curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout the system need additional support provided by the Instructional Framework. "The Framework will support the deep analysis of standards for planning and teaching, assessment development, and reflection which will become the culture of Cherokee County School System," stated one educator. Another shared, "We have enjoyed our reputation for good schooling and need to ensure the sustainability of academic excellence."

According to evidence in the Accreditation Report, District Implementation Plan, and minutes from school-based Professional Learning Communities (PLC), formal PLCs were launched system-wide in 2016 after a year of comprehensive training and planning with school-based administrators. In addition to the instructional planning occurring during PLC time, interviews revealed a need to do more with grade level common assessments and benchmarks. Currently, the system references national, state, and local assessments, iReady and Easy CBM, to monitor student growth and achievement. Although there is some development of local assessments to monitor and measure student learning aligned to the Georgia Standards of Excellence(GSE) and Georgia Milestones(GMAS), this varies from school-to-school. "A systematic approach to data training and the development of common assessments remain essential for continued success," stated a central office administrator. Another said, "We will not be satisfied with the status quo."

A school system that operates as a collaborative learning organization in which the curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices are aligned will ensure teacher effectiveness and quality student learning across all classrooms.

Opportunity For Improvement
Formalize processes whereby each student has an adult advocate who builds strong relationships over time with the student.
(Indicator 3.9)

Primary Indicator
Indicator 3.9

Evidence and Rationale
Through interviews with 174 students, 116 teachers and 106 administrators, it became evident that students were confident and comfortable approaching members of the faculty and staff with any problem or issue they may be experiencing. Many after school programs and charitable initiatives were discussed during interviews.

Evidence revealed that Cherokee County School System personnel and community organizations were actively involved in assisting students and families who may be in need of educational and/or economic assistance.

The Teacher as Advisor (TAA) program utilized in grades six through twelve provides for some consistency in advocacy for students, albeit for only one year. In addition, high school seniors work closely with teachers and mentors to complete a year-long senior project providing an opportunity for these individuals to support the student in various capacities.

Moreover, advocacy for students can be found within various activities within the schools. Students and faculty referenced the numerous clubs available to students at various schools established to meet the interests and socialization needs of the students. Additionally, it was apparent in student interviews that the various athletic programs students may participate in provided additional relationships with system personnel in support of the growth of the students involved.

Administrative initiatives also provided evidence of student advocacy. Struggling students are routinely identified and provided additional supports such as smaller class sizes. Additionally, interviews revealed programs in place involving certain students assigned to administrators and counselors who work with the student and their family to identify and assist with issues these families may be encountering. Choice programs were also identified that provide at-risk seniors weekly meetings to assist with academic success toward graduation.

Even with these support programs and services at the various schools, all students do not participate in an advocacy structure. School personnel have not fully implemented that structure that gives long-term interaction with individual students, allowing them to build strong relationships over time with the student and related adults.

Successful student advocacy must include clear, consistent, and reasonable expectations as the system continues to provide mentorship, support, and academic assistance in a safe environment for all students.

Leadership Capacity

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

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

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

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

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

Standard 1 - Purpose and Direction

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
1.1	The system engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a system-wide purpose for student success.	3.88	2.68
1.2	The system ensures that each school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	3.50	2.68
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.	3.62	2.90
1.4	Leadership at all levels of the system implement a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	3.88	2.65

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.	3.38	2.97
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	3.75	2.96
2.3	The governing body ensures that the leadership at all levels has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.	3.88	3.17
2.4	Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction.	3.75	3.03
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction.	3.62	2.74

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.	3.12	2.70

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	3.42
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	3.00	3.03

Findings

Powerful Practice

System and school leaders engage in proactive, persistent, and embedded efforts which result in meaningful parent and community involvement and a sense of pervasive ownership and investment from stakeholders and families regarding student learning, school performance, and achievement of system and school purpose and direction.

(Indicator 1.1, Indicator 1.2, Indicator 2.5, Indicator 3.8, Indicator 5.5, SF1. Questionnaire Administration)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 2.5

Evidence and Rationale

Interviews with stakeholders and visits to the elementary, middle and high schools verified that communication efforts from all levels of leadership to stakeholders increase involvement while developing and refining ownership of the school system. The system's extensive communication publications consistently win top honors from the Georgia School Public Relations Association, with Cherokee County School District (CCSD) claiming four "Best in the State" titles in the past four years. "The network of communication avenues to deliver

information, seek input, and encourage collaboration with all Cherokee County community stakeholders is amazing," stated an external stakeholder. Through social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, mass distribution emails, websites, text platforms, newsletters, parent universities, parent advisory groups, PTA/PTSA, stakeholder surveys, publications, media releases and ad hoc committees, the school system works to provide a contemporary and relevant pipeline of continual information and opportunities for stakeholders to provide input and suggestions.

Both system and school leadership provide ample opportunities for stakeholder involvement in improvement planning and decision-making. Considering recommendations from the Superintendent's Cabinet members, the Superintendent appoints ad hoc committees annually for specific policy review, budget planning, and special initiatives; and as appropriate, these include parents, business partners, community members and students. The School Board approved an extensive program of partnership agreements with local colleges and universities, businesses, and charitable or service organizations. Additionally, each school regularly solicits input from stakeholders through surveys, school councils, Partners in Education, and active school organizations such as PTA.

Family engagement is a true hallmark of CCSD. While athletic events are abundant, academic events such as K-12 Helen Ruffin Reading Bowls, K-8 Academic Bowls, subject area fairs, Science Olympiad, District Spelling Bee, and Superintendent's Key Scholars offer meaningful interaction and celebration. Every board meeting begins with celebrations of student and staff success. The online parent portal gives families full access to grades, assignments, progress monitoring and communication. Teacher websites and the CCSD Student Information System (ASPEN) portal provide a means for academic support. Parents can enroll in the system's Parent University courses to help their children, and English Language courses are offered for parents who want to improve their English skills.

A communication audit is conducted annually to ensure parent satisfaction with communication levels at teacher, school, and system levels. The school system uses a variety of methods in communicating data-related results to stakeholders. The system focuses on making results transparent by posting aggregated student achievement data on the system's website, social media platforms, and sharing with local media outlets. Even though parents currently have 24/7 access to students' progress through the parent portal, ASPEN, the system is in the process of implementing a new Learning Management System (Canvas), which will replace ASPEN. Canvas will provide 24/7 real-time access to attendance, grades, and instructional resources.

When interviewed, many teachers stated that they did not want to work anywhere else because of the investment of community as a whole in the school system. "An example of this is with our high school senior projects that allow students to partner with local community businesses to further explore their areas of interest," stated a teacher. Other employees shared the success of four Education (SPLOST) Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax initiatives in recent years with the most recent one passing with 73 percent approval. "When your system has grown by 157 percent in student enrollment from 1990 to 2016, you know the good news is spreading and the community is invested in your school system," stated an administrator.

The system engages in a systematic and inclusive process to review, revise, and communicate its purpose and direction for continuous improvement. The redesign of the Five-Year Strategic Plan is a result of feedback from system-level staff, school staff, parents, and community members and is truly reflective of the entire county and inclusive of all stakeholders. "We do not operate in a vacuum, and everything we do is transparent," shared a school leader. "Our vision is pervasive as we are all committed to Educating the Emerging Generation," stated a member of the system's Strategic Planning Team.

For a school system to be truly effective, leaders must consistently communicate with appropriate and varied representatives from stakeholder groups, provide opportunities for stakeholders to shape decisions, solicit feedback and respond to stakeholders, and provide and support meaningful roles for stakeholders.

Powerful Practice

The governing board is a cohesive and supportive unit that operates responsibly with clearly defined policies and clearly respects the autonomy of the administration to attain goals for student achievement and instructional growth, while effectively managing the day-to-day operations of the school.
(Indicator 2.2, Indicator 2.3)

Primary Indicator
Indicator 2.2

Evidence and Rationale
Evidence gathered through interviews with the superintendent, 106 administrators, 43 parents, and 30 community members and business partners affirmed a caring and supportive governing body that embraces leadership and ensures autonomy so that all school leaders can operate effectively in their roles. One parent specifically stated, "We couldn't be in better hands," while other parents specifically described the School Board as visible, trusting, and passionate. One stakeholder shared that board members are very approachable and always at school events. Others described the Board as a very cohesive board that is involved in budget priorities and taking care of the school system's resources. One comment from a community member captured a strong theme about the board as he stated, "There is an absolute genuine commitment to our children by the Board of Education."

The School Board is comprised of six elected officials, each representing a separate geographic region of the county, and a chair elected "at-large" to represent the School Board. Interviews with internal and external stakeholders revealed the strong, cohesive bond between board members. "There is no selfishness about taking care of only one's region. Board members are always weighing what is best for the system as a whole," shared a community member. The respect for and confidence in our board is evidenced by the passage of four Education SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) in recent years to construct and replace schools to house skyrocketing enrollment and develop a system-wide technology program. In addition, despite significant State "austerity budget cuts" and declining property tax revenue, the Board has maintained financial stability, recently reduced millage rate, and maintained budget reserves at 12 to 15 percent levels. Annual teacher attrition rate is seven percent and teacher salaries are ranked fifth highest in the State.

Cherokee County Board of Education has won two national awards and received several state level recognitions. When asked about how the Board respects and protects the autonomy of system and school leadership, one board member summed it up by saying, "We have two employees, the Superintendent and the Board attorney. Everyone else answers to the Superintendent." Another board member stated, "Hiring a good Superintendent is the greatest accomplishment of the board." Yet another board member shared, "We do a good job of staying in our lane and letting administration and staff get the job done." In addition to functioning in such a unified manner, the Board asked each high school to select a Student Delegate/ Advisor to the Board. He/she joins the School Board at the dais and participates in each board meeting, additional evidence of the board's steadfast focus on its primary stakeholder…the student.

"Our Board of Education has such a professional way of conducting business," stated a parent. Another said, "The Board is fully prepared at every meeting. There is not a weak link on the Board." In conclusion, a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) member described the governing board in her comment, "We are so fortunate. The depth and breadth of experience on our Cherokee County Board of Education is phenomenal."

An effective school system operates under a governing body that functions responsibly and effectively while ensuring that the leadership at all levels has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.

Powerful Practice
The superintendent, system administration, and school administration are strong, visionary leaders who support and encourage collaboration and shared leadership, thus fostering a caring culture that is consistent with the system's purpose and direction.
(Indicator 1.3, Indicator 1.4, Indicator 2.4)

Primary Indicator
Indicator 2.4

Evidence and Rationale
The mission of Cherokee County School System is to educate the emerging generation through learning environments designed to increase the performance of all students. The abbreviated mission mantra of "Educating the Emerging Generation" has been embedded throughout the system from the top of the website to the top of the minds of teachers, administrators, and leaders in all that they do. Belief statements of the school system reveal a shared responsibility for learning through partnerships with parents, businesses, community organizations and agencies, local institutions of higher learning, and other public entities. The Belief statements inform the major system priorities which guide the annual update of the system's Five-Year Strategic Plan.

Interviews indicated that the superintendent is seen as the catalyst that shapes the culture of the system. He is a supportive and highly visible leader who leads the charge to create a caring culture that positively impacts the educational efforts in the classroom and the entire system. Staff repeatedly shared that collaboration and open communication, as modeled by the superintendent, are norms of the school system. Not only is the

superintendent highly visible as internal leader of the school system, he is also very active throughout the community. He attends school events regularly throughout the county; participates in Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development, and many such civic clubs and organizations; speaks at Optimist Club meetings, the Association of Realtors, Retired Teachers Association, Ministerial Association meetings, college and university galas, and other community events; and serves on such boards as YMCA Board of Directors, the Technical College President's Advisory Council, and the Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors.

"Our superintendent, system level staff, and school administrators lead by example," stated a teacher. "We don't have to be pushed and pulled to get the job done. We march along together," said an employee. "Our commitment to Cherokee County School System is personal," stated a teacher who told of so many returning to their home area to give back to the community who took care of them. "When you have strong, charismatic leaders as we do in Cherokee County, you want to give it your best," shared a young aspiring leader. "Lead by example is demonstrated by our superintendent as he earned his Microsoft Innovative Educator (MIE) certification," stated a school principal. The system is proud of its national reputation for its successful MIE and certified classrooms and schools training, claiming the world's first certified elementary and middle schools. "We actually have strong, focused leaders throughout the school system," stated a community member.

Cherokee County School System's Divisions function interdependently and collaboratively. The annual Superintendent's Leadership Symposium provides clear communication for Division targets and timelines as a national leadership speaker and system leadership presentations are featured. System Quarterly Leadership meetings offering system staff the opportunity to present to peers and colleagues and monthly principals' meetings provide a few examples of deliberate and consistent collaboration and shared leadership. The superintendent made "growing leaders" an important theme, and this belief has been carried out through actions. There are four Leadership Academies to provide training and support for identified teachers and leaders. The locally-developed professional learning experience is designed to attract, train, and retain educators from teacher, assistant principal, and principal ranks.

Of the 174 students interviewed, everyone shared how much they loved their school, how much their principals and teachers cared for them, and how much pride they have in their schools. "Our SAT scores are higher than the state average, and this is the seventh year of being on the Advanced Placement District Honor Roll," stated a student leader. When a group of high school students was asked to share opinions about the school system, one student stated, "Our teachers care about more than just our grades." This caring and supportive sentiment was consistently expressed throughout the school system by students, staff, parents, and community members.

A shared vision of a student-driven culture from strong system-wide leadership that provides encouragement and support will foster continuous improvement to achieve the system's purpose.

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.	3.25	2.87
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.	3.25	2.87
4.3	The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	3.25	3.06
4.4	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system.	3.25	2.76

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.5	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system.	3.12	2.73
4.6	The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	3.12	2.72
4.7	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of support systems to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	3.00	2.58
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.	3.00	2.60

Conclusion

The team identified several pervasive themes that emerged during the time spent in the school system. It was obvious to the team that a strong sense of community and a "family atmosphere" exist in the school system. Every person interviewed mentioned the spirit of collaboration and how it is such a joy to be a part of the caring culture in Cherokee County School District (CCSD). There is genuine care and concern for students. The existence of a sense of pride and a commitment to shared values were heard repeatedly as an integral part of the success of the public schools in Cherokee County.

The findings from the 82 classroom observations regarding a well-managed and supportive learning environment were indicative of the caring culture of the entire school system. The well-managed and supportive learning environments were observed in classrooms at all grade levels from kindergarten through high school. Students spoke and interacted respectfully with teachers and peers and readily followed classroom rules.

The strong, visionary leadership theme was characterized by the superintendent, as well as system-level and school-level administrators. They all have a clear direction and remain focused on the vision of the school system. The visionary leaders work well with the Board of Education, system and school staff, community members, and parents.The strong relationship between the governing body and the superintendent helps to create a caring culture that values collaboration and communication. The entire administrative team from the central office to the school level was characterized as a leadership team that works well together and is very accessible to stakeholders. The importance of building relationships was evidenced in all interviews with both internal and external stakeholders. In addition, the proactive and persistent communication efforts of the leadership team result in meaningful parent involvement and a sense of pervasive ownership and investment from stakeholders and families.

The school system has maintained its finances and all other resources extremely well in recent years. School facilities are well-kept and updated, all teachers are highly qualified with a low attrition rate of only seven percent; and the technology infrastructure and equipment are modern and continuously updated. Such findings are indicative of an effective system that has a clear direction and stays focused on the vision of "Educating the Emerging Generation."

The themes of visionary leadership, commitment to shared values, a caring culture, a sense of pride and the importance of building relationships, a cohesive and supportive board, a clear focus on the vision, proactive and persistent communication efforts, parent involvement and community investment, and a genuine commitment to improve emerged during the review process. They permeate the entire school system and will be the forces that Cherokee County School District can build upon to bring about student success and organizational effectiveness.

The system recognizes its challenges and has some major activities already planned in order to better focus on success for all students. Although the school system has enjoyed success in student achievement and test scores overall, there are discrepancies in graduation rates from high school to high school, as well as

achievement gaps from one sub-population to another. To address these challenges, the school system is in the initial stages of implementing the Instructional Framework initiative. Developed in 2016, the Framework provides a cycle of professional instruction for all educators and sets a cohesive expectation of performance and learning across all classrooms in the school system. The development process began in 2016-2017 with three days of design work by the Instructional Framework Design Team. Initial implementation began in January of 2017 based on a strategic four-year phase-in plan. The Framework is set in four domains (Design, Instruct, Assess, and Reflect) and outlines ten fundamental concepts of effective instructional practice. Cherokee County School System must follow through with the four-year phase-in plan to meet the goal of continuous improvement to gain positive student and teacher growth.

Using the Improvement Priority as a road map can form a foundation for growth and improvement. The Improvement Priority is the one thing that the team identified as preventing the school system from being as effective as it could be in meeting the system goal of continuous improvement. Fully implementing the Instructional Framework can have a major impact on improving student performance and system effectiveness. By addressing this identified action, the school system may enhance its capacity to reach a higher level of performance and find success for every student.

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:

- Fully implement the Instructional Framework initiative in order to refine and enhance the instructional process used by teachers to systematically support quality student learning across all classrooms in the school system.

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	315.85	278.94
Teaching and Learning Impact	289.88	268.48
Leadership Capacity	361.46	293.71
Resource Utilization	315.62	286.27

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
ACE Academy	300.00	372.73	328.57	325.64
Arnold Mill Elementary School	300.00	327.27	314.29	310.26
Avery Elementary School	342.86	363.64	357.14	351.28
Ball Ground Elementary School	261.90	336.36	314.29	292.31
Bascomb Elementary School	304.76	336.36	300.00	312.82
Canton Elementary School	276.19	363.64	342.86	312.82
Carmel Elementary School	323.81	363.64	285.71	328.21
Cherokee High School	309.52	327.27	342.86	320.51
Clark Creek Elementary School	295.24	354.55	314.29	315.38
Clayton Elementary School	295.24	309.09	300.00	300.00
Creekland Middle School	319.05	318.18	314.29	317.95
Creekview High School	304.76	318.18	357.14	317.95
Dean Rusk Middle School	295.24	354.55	342.86	320.51
E. T. Booth Middle School	295.24	327.27	300.00	305.13
Etowah High School	328.57	354.55	342.86	338.46
Florine Dial Johnston Elementary School	295.24	336.36	300.00	307.69
Free Home Elementary School	333.33	354.55	285.71	330.77
Freedom Middle School	319.05	381.82	342.86	341.03
Hickory Flat Elementary School	319.05	363.64	314.29	330.77
Holly Springs Elementary School	300.00	345.45	300.00	312.82
Indian Knoll Elementary School	357.14	390.91	328.57	361.54
Joseph Knox Elementary School	338.10	381.82	328.57	348.72
Kleven Boston Elementary School	285.71	336.36	300.00	302.56
Liberty Elementary School	328.57	381.82	342.86	346.15

Institution Name	Teaching and Learning Impact	Leadership Capacity	Resource Utilization	Overall IEQ Score
Little River Elementary School	300.00	345.45	300.00	312.82
Macedonia Elementary School	304.76	372.73	285.71	320.51
Marie Archer Teasley Middle School	347.62	363.64	371.43	356.41
Mill Creek Middle School	323.81	372.73	371.43	346.15
Mountain Road Elementary School	319.05	327.27	300.00	317.95
Oak Grove Elementary School	304.76	336.36	300.00	312.82
R. M. Moore Elementary School	290.48	318.18	371.43	312.82
River Ridge High School	319.05	318.18	342.86	323.08
Sequoyah High School	295.24	300.00	285.71	294.87
Sixes Elementary School	314.29	381.82	328.57	335.90
William G. Hasty Sr. Elementary School	304.76	345.45	342.86	323.08
Woodstock Elementary School	347.62	345.45	342.86	346.15
Woodstock High School	290.48	281.82	342.86	297.44
Woodstock Middle School	295.24	327.27	300.00	305.13

Other System Institutions

The following institutions did not utilize ASSIST to complete the Accreditation Report for this External Review. Therefore self-reported results are not included as part of this report. Some institutions appearing below may have been required to submit the Accreditation Report outside of ASSIST.

Institution	Institution
Ralph Bunche Center	

Team Roster

Member	Brief Biography
Dr. Cheryl C Allread	Dr. Allread's career spans over 40 years. She retired from Marion County Schools in South Carolina after having taught math and science for 7 years, serving as principal for 11 years, as assistant superintendent for instruction for 11 years, and as district superintendent for 7 years. After retirement from 36 years working in Marion County, she began working as a consultant with the S.C. State Department of Education, serving as Liaison for low-performing schools/Palmetto Priority Schools. She also conducted academic audits, served as principal mentor and served as a leadership coach in instructional supervision. Dr. Allread serves as Field Consultant for AdvancED in S.C. and works as Lead Evaluator for AdvancED in schools and districts across the country, as well as continuing to work as a private consultant with schools in instructional supervision.
Dr. Audrey M Williams	Dr. Audrey Williams is beginning her 26th year in the Whitfield County School district serving as teacher, special education technology specialist, system instructional technology coordinator, curriculum improvement director, executive director of assessment & accountability, system AdvancED leader, system strategic plan leader, Chief Officer for Assessment & Technology for Assessment & Accountability, IE2 team, GLISI system leader, and currently as Assistant Superintendent for Assessment & Accountability. Dr. Williams has also taught various curriculum and instruction courses for graduate education programs and works with the Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI) in providing leadership opportunities for Whitfield County Schools Aspiring Leaders Program. Audrey has also enjoyed serving as Associate Lead Evaluator with review teams in several Georgia school districts over the past seven years.
Ms. Mary L Mickelson	Ms. Mickelson is an AdvancED certified Lead Evaluator and has chaired / served on NCA-CASI and SACS-CASI school and district QAR teams in Indiana, Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Michigan, Mississippi, Kentucky, North Carolina,Texas and Virginia. Mary has served as DoDEA External Review / QAR team Lead Evaluator / chair or Associate Lead for more than 30 DoDEA schools in Europe, Japan, Korea, and stateside locations. She has served as Lead Evaluator / chair or Associate Lead for international school teams in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Mary has worked extensively with AdvancED as an Indiana state committee member (ten years as the state superintendent's designee). Ms. Mickelson is currently an adjunct instructor for graduate education and transition to teaching programs (including student teaching). Mary has written and teaches curriculum and instruction courses for online graduate education programs. Particular areas of expertise include: continuous improvement at the school and district levels; data-driven decision-making; curriculum and instructional improvement; and professional development. Mary served the Indiana Department of Education in several roles: Director of School Accreditation (approximately 2200 public and non-public schools); education consultant for accreditation and gifted/talented education. In addition, Mary has experience at the local school and district levels: grant writer / manager; continuous improvement and assessment director; gifted/talented education coordinator/teacher/curriculum developer; music educator. Ms. Mickelson holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from Indiana State University and the gifted/talented education endorsement from Purdue University.

Member	Brief Biography
Mr. Charles Clare	Charles Clare has served as a Lead Evaluator and team member for systems reviews, school level reviews and early learning reviews throughout Virginia and beyond state lines since 2011. Previously, he served as an educational contractor for the Office of School Improvement with the Virginia Department of Education prior to serving as the Associate Director for AdvancED in the Virginia office.
	Charles began his career in public education as a mathematics teacher for six years at the middle school level before moving to the high school level in Hanover County, Virginia. After fifteen years in the classroom, Charles then held administrative positions as assistant principal, high school principal, and assistant superintendent in neighboring King William County. He then served as superintendent of a small rural public school division also in the Richmond area of Virginia until his retirement in 2013. Charles completed doctoral coursework in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Virginia Tech, earned his master's degree in Administration and Supervision from Virginia Commonwealth University and his bachelor's degree in Education from The University of North Carolina at Charlotte.
Mrs. Amanda Dale	Mrs. Amanda Dale is currently serving in her 21st year as a South Carolina Educator. She is currently the Director of Special Services in Marion County School District in Marion, South Carolina. Her career spans all areas of special education including 16 years classroom experience, 14 years as an autism specialist, and 9 years as district test coordinator for alternate assessments. Her past areas of service also include Low Incidence Disabilities Specialist, Secondary Coordinator for Student and Special Services, and Gifted and Talented Coordinator. She holds National Board Certification in Special Education and is a current candidate for her Educational Doctorate in Education Administration.
Mrs. Kathleen French	Mrs. Kathleen French is principal at Mason Creek Elementary in Douglas County, Georgia. She has worked in the school district for over 22 years. Kathleen has served as an educator, team leader, assistant principal and principal. She represented the Douglas County School System at the Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI) as the Improvement Initiative Coordinator for two years. She is also a Leadership Preparation .Performance Coach, an iLead mentor and has previously served on an External Review Team for Advanc-ED. She is leading her school through the accreditation process for STEM certification from Advanc-ED. She is a graduate of the University of West Georgia where she earned her Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education, Masters in Special Education and Educational Leadership degrees.

Member	Brief Biography
Mrs. Donna James Jackson	Donna Jackson has been an educator in the Bibb County Public School District for 24 years. Mrs. Jackson began her teaching career at Sonny Carter Elementary. After several years of successful teaching performance, her first administrative appointment was made as an assistant principal at Burghard Elementary, where she served for two years. She then moved to Porter Elementary, where she served two years as an assistant principal prior to becoming principal at the school for five years. After leaving Porter Elementary she served as principal of Heritage Elementary for five years. During the 2012-13 year, she was the Associate Superintendent of Zone 1 in the Bibb County School District. She is currently serving her fourth term as the Springdale principal. As a leader, she has worked diligently with school communities to create an enriching environment for all students, something she strongly embraces as part of her educational philosophy. She works collaboratively with all stakeholders to build strength of character and ensure students are college and career ready. Mrs. Jackson earned a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education at Wesleyan College, and both Master's and Specialist Degrees in Educational Leadership at Georgia College and State University. She is a member of the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE), was a participant at the Georgia Leadership for School Improvement (GLISI) in Atlanta, Georgia, and volunteers with Girl Scouts of America. Mrs. Jackson's dedication to education and leadership for students and faculty/staff has not been left unrecognized. Among her numerous accolades, most notable is being chosen as Teacher of the Year at Sonny Carter Elementary in 1996, top three finalist for Bibb County Teacher of the Year in 1996, a Georgia Leadership for School Improvement (GLISI) Celebrity in 2004-2005, being honored as Georgia's Principal of the Year for the Visiting International Faculty (VIF) in 2006-2007, Georgia Learning Resource System (GLRS) Special Education Impact Award in 2012, and most recently receiving the Greatest Gains Silver Award (top 5% of schools in GA) from the Governor's Office of Student Achievement.
Mr. Jeff Lariscy	Mr. Lariscy began his career as a high school mathematics teacher in 1990. After three (3) years of teaching, the district posted a position for Technology Coordinator. He applied for and was selected for this position and has been Information Technology Coordinator for twenty-three (23) years. Within the last several years, Lariscy has also become responsible for media services and is now the district coordinator for Media Specialists and the Media Program as well. His educational preparation included attendance at Georgia Southern University where he received his Bachelor's of Science in Mathematics Education and his Masters in Educational administration as well as Nova Southeastern University from which he received his Educational Specialist Degree in Educational Technology Management. Lariscy has also served as a member of the Georgia Accrediting Commission for the last two years. He has served as co-chair of the Georgia Department of Education Instructional Technology Advisory Committee for two years as well as teaching instructional technology courses at Georgia Southern University as an adjunct professor.
Mrs. Lezettra Saunders	Lezettra D. Saunders is the Curriculum Coordinator for Science and STEM in the Richmond County School System located in Augusta, Georgia. She has been employed by the Richmond County School System for 17 years. Prior to her current position, Lezettra was a secondary science teacher. She primarily taught Biology and Anatomy and Physiology. As the Curriculum Coordinator for Science and STEM, Lezettra is responsible for planning, organizing, and overseeing the K-12 science program, curriculum, textbook adoption, and assessment instrument development. She provides strong instructional leadership that promotes effective science classroom teaching practices, increased student achievement, and consistency of program implementation across the school system.

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Member	Brief Biography
Mrs. Stacy Wilbanks	Stacy Wilbanks currently serves as the Coordinator for Curriculum and Instruction for Marion County Schools in Marion, South Carolina. Much of her curriculum and instruction work is rooted in literacy practices K-12 and Early Childhood Education. She is a graduate of Clemson University with a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education and holds certifications in Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education. Mrs. Wilbanks also earned a Master's degree in Educational Leadership and School Administration and is certified as an Elementary Principal. Mrs. Wilbanks has experiences teaching primary and elementary grades, as well as alternative school for middle and high school grades, and work as a curriculum and instruction specialist.

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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