



Accreditation Progress Report

Jefferson City Schools

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1.0 About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

Background. Dedicated to advancing excellence in education worldwide, AdvancED provides accreditation, research, and professional services to 27,000 schools in 65 countries. AdvancED provides accreditation under the seals of the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI).

The Accreditation Process.

To earn and maintain accreditation, district/systems must:

1. Meet the AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems.

District/Systems demonstrate adherence to the seven AdvancED standards which describe the quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for school systems to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness.

2. Engage in continuous improvement.

District/Systems implement continuous improvement focused on improving student performance and school effectiveness.

3. Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review.

District/Systems engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, district/systems host an external Quality Assurance Review team once every five years. The team evaluates the district/system's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the district/system's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and required actions to help the district/system improve. The district/system acts on the team's required actions and submits an Accreditation Progress Report at prescribed intervals following the Quality Assurance Review.

The AdvancED accreditation process engages the entire school community in a continuous process of self-evaluation and improvement. The overall aim is to help district/systems be the best they can be on behalf of the students they serve.

2.0 Introduction to the Accreditation Progress Report

Purpose

The Accreditation Progress Report (APR) is a critical component of the AdvancED accreditation process. It engages the district/system in a detailed review and analysis of the steps it has taken to address the required actions made by the AdvancED Quality Assurance Review (QAR) team. Completing the report helps the district/system focus and reflect on its continuous improvement efforts.

It is the responsibility of the district/system to address each of the QAR report's required actions within the 5-year term accreditation. Deadlines for completion of the report are based on the district/system's accreditation status and must be met to maintain accreditation. Some district/systems may complete multiple reports during the 5-year term to demonstrate that they have fully addressed the required actions.

Structure of the Report

The APR is organized around the required actions in the district/system's QAR team report. The APR lists the required action from the report along with the rationale and evidence supporting the required action. The district/system then indicates the progress that it has made toward meeting the required action and provides a more detailed response describing the actions it has taken and the results obtained. The district/system provides a response for each of the QAR team required actions.

Following the district/system's response is the reviewer's response. Each APR is read by an AdvancED reader in the state or regional office who reviews the district/system's response to determine if the required action has been met. The reader provides his/her assessment of the progress the school has made and then offers comments to the district/system. If required actions remain in progress or not addressed, a new APR will be created with a new deadline for completion. As noted earlier, the district/system must address the required actions within the 5-year accreditation term.

Conclusion

The Accreditation Progress Report is a useful report for members of the district/system and broader community. It helps community members see and monitor the ongoing improvement efforts of their district/system. It demonstrates how the district/system uses its accreditation for the ongoing benefit of the students it serves.

3.0. Summary

1.1. Based on the actions taken by your institution to address the required actions provided by the QAR team, what has been the impact on your institution's overall effectiveness?:

In an effort to continue providing quality educational services in order for students to become fully functioning adults who are competitive in a global society, the Jefferson City School System has worked diligently to implement processes and procedures to address the two required actions made by the Quality Assurance Review Team. System and school leaders have worked collaboratively with stakeholders to improve overall effectiveness in the areas of integrating systemic and systematic processes for the alignment of curriculum, instruction, assessment, interventions, and school improvement planning, PreK-12 and soliciting meaningful involvement of all stakeholders to address budgetary and instructional challenges for 21st century learning. In an effort to continuously improve and become recognized as a national leader in educational performance, the system is in the process of engaging in a formalized strategic planning process and pursuing a charter petition, which will enable the system to continue to make gains in addressing the two required actions. It is the desire of Jefferson City Schools to have the strategic planning process inform the contents of the charter petition to ensure that the system accomplishes its mission and continues to provide quality educational opportunities that enable students to become successful, responsible, and contributing citizens.

System and school leaders have worked hard to vertically align processes, procedures, and practices that have led to improved student performance and overall operations within and across the four schools. Having a uniform process for curricular and instructional development and implementation has been beneficial in increasing collaboration among teachers and other staff members within and across grade levels, departments, and schools. Common formative and summative assessments have enabled our teachers, system-wide, to engage in meaningful conversations about students' progress toward academic goals. In addition, the refinement of the middle and high school Response to Interventions process to mirror the model implemented in the elementary schools have enabled administrators and teachers to identify skill gaps and deficiencies and employ intervention strategies designed to help students improve academic performance. Working with stakeholders to obtain feedback on budgetary and instructional decisions has also enabled the system to make more effective decisions regarding maximizing resources and being creative in offering quality educational opportunities to students, which has had a positive impact on student performance and operations throughout the system.

Over the last two years, the Jefferson City School System has continued to attain high levels of achievement as evidenced by state performance data. Test results consistently are higher than local and state averages. Jefferson Elementary School has been recognized as the top school in the state for their exceptional Response to Interventions model, and school leaders and teachers have presented best practices at state level conferences. Jefferson Academy and Jefferson Middle School have been recognized as Title I High Reward Schools for the last two years based on scores on the Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT). In addition, Jefferson Academy has been recognized as a National Title I Distinguished School based on having the highest test scores on the CRCT for a three year period. Jefferson High School received high honors for student performance on Advanced Placement Tests, and students showed significant gains on the SAT. Test results on End of Course Tests in the areas of Economics, Biology, and English Language Arts are among the highest in the state. The district's College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) score has been one of the top scores in the state for the past two years.

Collaboration with community and business leaders and other stakeholders has enabled Jefferson High School to expand work based learning, dual enrollment, and online learning opportunities for students. The Jefferson City

School System continues to experience high levels of participation and success within the extracurricular and athletic programs, which is a direct result of increased collaboration among system and school leaders and various stakeholders in support of quality programs for students.

The Jefferson City School System Board of Education has been recognized as a Top Ten winner in the Digital School Boards Survey, an annual survey conducted by the Center for Digital Education and the National School Boards Association. The Digital School Districts Survey identifies innovative uses of technology supported by school boards, including expanding virtual schools and digital curriculum, digital textbook and laptop initiatives. Top ten rankings are awarded to those school boards/districts that most fully implement technology benchmarks in the evolution of digital education, as represented in the survey questions. Jefferson City Schools received 3rd place in the mid-sized student population category and was one of only a few school districts in the state of Georgia receiving the award.

System and school leaders believe that the two required actions are areas that need constant attention and review because they both serve as the foundation for excellence within the academic, athletic, and arts programs in Jefferson City Schools. A rating of "In Progress" has been assigned to both required actions. While system and school leaders feel that progress has been made in both areas, we recognize that continuous improvement in both areas will enable Jefferson City Schools to be a leader not only in the state but also at the national level. We acknowledge that a vertical alignment approach and ongoing collaboration with various groups of stakeholders supports the motto of "Exposure to Excellence Promotes Excellence" and helps us to accomplish the mission of graduating fully functioning adults who are competitive in a global society. It is our goal to continue to provide the absolute best educational opportunities to all students who enter the doors of Jefferson City Schools.

1.2. What would you consider to be challenges that still lie ahead and how do you plan to address those challenges?:

Budgetary constraints continue to be a challenge facing Jefferson City Schools. Over the last two years, teachers have been faced with furlough days, which has reduced the opportunities for teacher in-service days for professional learning. The system has done a good job providing opportunities within the regular instructional day through release time in order to provide professional learning time for teachers to engage in vertical alignment and other activities related to school improvement goals and initiatives. To address the issue, system and school leaders have met with various groups of stakeholders to review budget and instructional items to ensure that resources are aligned to system and school improvement goals, and feedback has been obtained to guide decision-making.

An increase in enrollment and diversity in the student population is another challenge. As the focus of accountability shifts from achievement to more of an emphasis on student growth, the system is reviewing its procedures and practices to ensure that teachers are equipped with the skills and tools needed to help students make academic gains from one year to the next. Not only do students need to pass the state mandated assessments, they also have to show growth comparable to their academic peers across the state, and teachers will be evaluated based on the amount of student growth. This is a change in mindset for many teachers, and this will require the system and school leaders to engage in meaningful conversations with teachers, parents, students, community and business leaders, and other stakeholders to identify and implement strategies and programs that need to be put in place to ensure all students are exposed to higher levels of rigor and are prepared for the increased demands within the state testing program. We recognize the need to change our practices to ensure that we are making adequate growth with all groups of students.

Engaging in a formalized strategic planning process and pursuing a charter petition will serve the system well in

making the adjustments needed to continue to be a leader in the state and to become recognized as a national leader because both initiatives provide an opportunity for an external review of the system's practices, procedures, and operations. Having an external glance will enable system and school leaders, in collaboration with multiple stakeholders, to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats as part of the strategic planning process.

1.3. How will you use the insights gained from your accreditation activities to inform and enhance your quality assurance and school improvement efforts?:

Insights gained from the accreditation activities will be used to inform and enhance the Jefferson City School System's quality assurance and school improvement efforts. The Board of Education is committed to providing the best education possible to all students. System and school leaders will continue to engage in a continuous improvement model through collaboration with teachers, parents, students, community and business leaders, and other stakeholders to capitalize on the talents and skills of those who serve our community and support our schools. A formalized strategic planning process will provide an excellent opportunity for a diverse group of stakeholders to become involved in the development of a plan that is tied to district and local school improvement plans, budgets, and evaluation systems and is sustainable and effective in moving the district to the next level of student achievement and organizational excellence. This process will allow system and school leaders to develop stronger working relationships with its stakeholders as they partner together to plan and implement a quality program that helps all students become successful and contributing citizens as they exit Jefferson City Schools.

Jefferson City Schools hosted a Quality Assurance Review team on 03/04/2012 - 03/07/2012. Through interviews with district/system stakeholders, classroom observations, and a review of district/system documents and student performance results, the team developed a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) report detailing its findings from the visit. The full report can be viewed at www.advanc-ed.org.

The QAR report contained commendations and required actions for the district/system. The district/system is responsible for addressing each of the required actions in the report. At prescribed intervals based on the district/system's accreditation status, the district/system must complete an Accreditation Progress Report. Below, please find the required actions from the QAR report and the district/system's response to each required action. Following the district/system's response is the reviewer's progress response and comments.

4.0. Required Action 1

Source: QAR

Date: 2012-04-09

Required Action:

Integrate systemic and systematic processes for the alignment of curriculum, instruction, assessment, interventions, and school improvement planning, Pre-K-12.

Evidence:

The QAR team found substantial evidence of exemplary practice in the areas noted. JCSS delivers high quality instruction consistently at some schools. The system has embarked on a systematic process of examining the Common Core curriculum standards and has institutionalized processes for data analysis and development of interventions at the elementary level. The system provided some examples of meaningful and effective school improvement planning processes. These practices are not as yet systemic, however, with noticeable gaps at the secondary level. The system has initiated processes to improve alignment and consistency across the system, notably through its use of Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards (a school wide audit process), use of the Learning-Focused Instruction model, and implementation of cross-grade classroom walkthroughs by teachers and administrators.

Rationale:

Full, ongoing implementation of methods to improve alignment -- largely based on systematically maximizing the high quality practices already in place in parts of JCSS -- will move the entire system forward.

4.1. District/System Response

Progress Status: In Progress

Response: **Actions Taken to Address the Required Action**

A rating of "In Progress" has been selected for this particular required action. Although system and school leaders feel that improvements have been made in the alignment of curriculum, instruction, assessment, interventions, and school improvement planning, PreK-12, this is an area in which system and school leaders feel that continuous

improvement is necessary in order to meet the increased challenges associated with federal, state, and local accountability measures. As the focus of accountability continues to shift from achievement to progress, it is critical that Jefferson City Schools continually refine their processes and practices to ensure the alignment of curriculum, instruction, assessment, interventions, and school improvement planning enable teachers and students to engage in high levels of teaching and learning that lead to academic growth for all subgroups of students.

Jefferson City Schools has implemented several practices system-wide to address the required action to integrate systemic and systematic processes for the alignment of curriculum, instruction, assessment, interventions, and school improvement planning, PreK-12. System and school leaders have provided more time for collaborative planning for teachers within and across departments and grade levels to develop, review, and refine curriculum maps, instructional units, and common formative and summative assessments. The focus of professional learning time is based on vertical and horizontal planning and alignment of resources to ensure a smooth transition from grade to grade and school to school.

All four schools have engaged in the data teams process, and additional formalized training will be provided during the summer 2014 to align practices throughout the system. The school psychologist has worked with all schools in the system to refine the Response to Intervention process at the secondary level to mirror the model that has been implemented with much success at the elementary level. Teams of teachers and administrators from both the middle and high school have attended Response to Intervention training in an effort to expand knowledge of specific interventions and best practices that are effective in meeting the diverse needs of students. System and school leaders are continuously examining ways to revise the Response to Intervention process to build a high quality, sustainable program throughout the system.

A team from the elementary school presented at the (Student Support Team Association for Georgia Educators) SSTAGE Promising Practices conference during the 2013-2014 school year. The elementary school was the recipient of the SSTAGE Star of the Year Award for promising practices in Response to Intervention. The model that is in place at the elementary level has served as the model for both the middle and high schools. All four schools are using progress monitoring data to identify revisions that may be needed within the current master schedule to ensure all students are served according to their academic needs as determined by universal screening data. This process informs the types of intervention, whether it be enrichment or remediation, students need during extended learning periods (e.g. Focused Individualized Remediation and Enrichment (FIRE) period and Content Connect at the high school level, Reading and Mathematics Coaching at the middle school level, and literacy extended learning period at the elementary school level).

System and school leaders have completed a book study on *Rigorous Curriculum Design: How to Create Curricular Units of Study that Align Standards, Instruction, and Assessment* by Larry Ainsworth and have used the information from the book to create a template for curriculum maps, instructional plans and common formative assessments to ensure uniformity within the curricular and instructional programs throughout the system. In addition, system and school leaders discuss progress toward the required

action at monthly administrators' meetings. Federal program and local funds are used to support professional learning in the area of curriculum alignment to ensure instructional plans and assessments are aligned to content standards. Vertical alignment sessions have been conducted with teachers in various content areas during the regular instructional day and off-contract time to provide an opportunity for teachers throughout the system to identify priority standards based on analysis of student achievement data. Teachers have been able to identify skill gaps and deficiencies based on formative and summative assessment results and have adjusted instruction to address these specific areas.

A system-wide school improvement process is utilized to review data, set goals, create action plans, and drive school improvement. The instructional services staff members meet on a regular basis with principals and assistant principals from all four schools to review the school improvement process procedures to ensure that all four schools are aligned in their practices with regards to reviewing curriculum, instructional plans, and assessment data to set school improvement goals. A specific timeline has been developed and teams of teachers, administrators, support staff members, parents, and other stakeholders work together to implement the components of the school improvement process throughout the system.

Most recently, system leaders have provided an opportunity for teachers to work together by content level, PreK-12, to participate in training related to Student Learning Objectives, which is part of the new teacher effectiveness system that will be implemented statewide in 2014-2015. Content area teachers have worked collaboratively to review priority standards by grade level and identify assessment items aligned to those standards. The assessment items will be used to develop common assessments and student learning objectives to measure academic growth of students. The system has made a commitment to aligning resources and using a uniform platform for the implementation of Student Learning Objectives and analysis of formative and summative assessment data.

Listed below are additional activities that have occurred within and across grade levels, departments, and/or schools in an effort to address the required action made by the Quality Assurance Review Team:

- Collaborative grade level development and use of the following items: priority standards with essential knowledge, skills, and depth of knowledge defined, curriculum maps, common assessments, and data teams process including analysis of needs and goal setting
- Time allotted for collaborative and meaningful curriculum work through quarterly collaborative planning days to allow time to create, analyze, and adjust above stated items, monthly collaborative planning meetings between grade levels and special program teachers, and weekly grade level meetings to discuss curriculum, instruction, and assessment needs
- Vertical alignment training sessions for English Language Arts and Mathematics teachers to align curriculum maps, instructional units, and common formative assessments to Common Core Georgia Performance Standards
- Content area committees established to guide vertical alignment across grade levels and to ensure a seamless transition as students progress from one school to the next - teachers are provided opportunities to meet with teachers in other schools to review curricular and instructional practices as part of the vertical

alignment process

- Committees have been established in all four schools and meet on a regular basis to review curriculum maps, instructional units, and assessments to ensure alignment to state standards and system goals for improvement
- Creation of an Advanced Placement committee that meets monthly to address ways to enhance and expand the AP program to ensure quality instruction is being provided and students are successful on AP exams and adequately prepared for college entrance, which requires collaboration among administrators and teachers throughout the system to ensure students are progressing at appropriate rates and learning content at an accelerated and rigorous pace as they progress from grade to grade; the committee is comprised of administrators, teachers, parents, and other community stakeholders

Results of Action Steps

In an effort to address this particular required action, system and school leaders have involved various stakeholders, including teachers, support staff, parents, and community and business leaders in ongoing meetings to identify and evaluate practices related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment that have had the most positive impact on teaching and learning. Those practices have been the ones that we have used as a framework in setting up a more comprehensive, vertical alignment approach throughout the system. The implementation of system-wide initiatives, such as but not limited to uniform templates for curriculum and instruction design, Response to Intervention model, and school improvement planning tool, have enabled system and school leaders to integrate systemic and systematic processes for the alignment of curriculum, instruction, assessment, interventions, and school improvement planning, PreK-12, as evidenced by increased student achievement and student growth scores within the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI - the state's new accountability measure).

Additionally, feedback from surveys has indicated that the practices that have been put in place system-wide to improve alignment of curriculum, instruction, assessment, interventions, and school improvement planning have had a positive impact on teaching and learning. Results from the surveys show that teachers value the opportunity for increased collaboration and feel as though the vertical alignment sessions have enabled them to improve their teaching because of the increased awareness of grade level standards and expectations of where students will be when they enter their classrooms and where they need to be when they exit their classrooms. The implementation of the action steps has also improved the transition from one school to the next for students.

Next Steps

The Jefferson City School System will continue to review processes and procedures in order to maximize the high quality practices already in place in an effort to move the system forward in the area of systemic and systematic processes for the alignment of curriculum, instruction, assessment, interventions, and school improvement planning, PreK-12. The Board of Education is in the process of engaging in a more formalized strategic planning process aligned to the Georgia School Boards Association Vision

Project, which will enable system and school leaders to work collaboratively with teachers, parents, community and business leaders, and other stakeholders to identify additional ways that the system's processes, practices, and procedures can be vertically aligned to ensure quality, rigorous instruction is provided to all students.

System and school leaders will continue to work with teachers and other stakeholders to embed and sustain the actions described above to ensure that the system continues to meet the required action. Additional opportunities and funding will be provided for teachers to engage in vertical alignment activities as they review and refine curriculum maps, instructional units, common formative and summative assessments, interventions, and school improvement planning, PreK-12.

4.2. Reviewer Response

Progress Response: Completed

Comments for Institution: AdvancED commends the district for the steps it has taken to address the Required Action of the Quality Assurance Review team. In its response, the district provided a thorough description of initiatives developed and implemented to address this Required Action. For example, vertical and horizontal collaborative planning time has been provided to teachers; data teams have worked on common formative and summative assessments; the exemplary and highly recognized Response to Intervention process at the elementary level has been expanded to the middle and high schools; school and district leaders have engaged in rigorous research and have created templates for curriculum maps and instructional plans; and other strategies were highlighted. Moreover, the district shared monitoring strategies to measure the success of the aforementioned initiatives as well as next steps. Although the district explained its rating of "In Progress" as work will continue in this area, AdvancED believes this Required Action is completed as it has demonstrated its ability to respond to the team's direction and encourages the district to continue its efforts.

5.0. Required Action 2

Source: QAR

Date: 2012-04-09

Required Action:

Solicit meaningful involvement of all stakeholders to address budgetary and instructional challenges for 21st century learning.

Evidence:

JCSS has been unusually creative and resourceful in making the most of limited resources. Evidence shared with the QAR team showed that reductions in state funding over the last decade have been significant, but the system has compensated for them through strategic cuts in services (including furloughs) and by raising funds through

both public and private sources. The system has managed to increase its record of achievement despite these fiscal challenges. In looking toward the future, the system will need to engage its community in discussion of full access to the learning possibilities available in the 21st century, which requires significant investment in infrastructure, professional learning by the instructional staff, and instructional materials and equipment. In addition the system has relied on informal methods of soliciting input from its stakeholders, possible for a small school system, but less feasible as the system's population and diversity grows, and as it seeks to reach its full potential as a national model in education. Full inclusion of stakeholders in the process is in order.

Rationale:

Developing formalized processes for gaining stakeholder perspectives will increase reciprocal communication between the system and the larger community, and will promote discussions of constructive and consensus-based solutions to ongoing fiscal challenges.

5.1. District/System Response

Progress Status: In Progress

Response: **Actions Taken to Address the Required Action**

The rating "In Progress" is assigned for this particular required action. While progress has been made in this particular area, system and school leaders acknowledge the importance of continually examining ways to increase stakeholder involvement, both informally and formally, to address budgetary and instructional challenges for 21st century learning. To date, Jefferson City Schools has increased opportunity for stakeholder involvement to address budgetary and instructional challenges for 21st century learning through the following methods:

School Councils, comprised of parents, teachers, administrators, business leaders, and other community stakeholders, have been more involved in the decision-making process on initiatives related to school safety, integration of technology, and increasing parent involvement. Based on input from school council members and other stakeholders, modifications have been made to safety procedures throughout the system, including installation of security doors in all buildings. In addition, parent training classes have been provided as a result of feedback from school council members. Technology purchases have been made based on collaborative planning with various stakeholders.

Parent Teacher Organizations along with School Councils are collaborating more with school level administration in determining what to purchase with regards to technology equipment as part of the Bring Your Own Technology initiative in an effort to establish a 21st century learning environment for students. Based on the suggestion from members of both organizations, the use of technology equipment such as tablets has been piloted in several classrooms, and feedback was solicited regarding the effectiveness on improving student engagement. As a result of positive feedback, the decision was made to purchase tablets for all elementary school classrooms. The parent-teacher organization and school council partnered with the administrative team to develop a plan for raising funds to purchase the tablets, cases, and access to a website that would provide electronic leveled readers to all students at home and school.

School Improvement Plans and System and School Budgets are discussed with various groups of individuals: School Council members are provided these documents in their handbooks, and discussion on items to include in the school improvement plans and how to use federal, state, and local funds are included as an agenda item for School Council meetings; the Superintendent and Finance Director attend School Council, PTO, and other system and school level meetings to discuss the system budget and seek input on ways to address budgetary issues within the system; the Title I director invites all parents of students eligible for Title I services to an annual planning meeting to review the school improvement plans, Title I budget, parent involvement plan, and Targeted Assistance Plan - this provides an opportunity for all parents to give feedback regarding ways to improve parent involvement, share ideas for spending Title I funds to support teaching and learning, and provide feedback regarding revisions that need to be made in the Title I plans.

Leadership teams established at each school to meet on a regular basis to review school improvement plans, system and school budgets, technology plans, etc. Each team is comprised of administrators and teachers representing various grade levels, content areas, and special programs. The group reviews various issues related to the operations of the school and provide input on ways to expend federal, state, and local funds to support the goals outlined in the school improvement plans and are actively involved in the decision-making process. Individuals serving on the committees serve as liaisons between administration and faculty and staff members.

The system has partnered with an external vendor to conduct an audit of technology equipment and services in order to improve the quality of education efforts tailored and customized to meet the needs of students, teachers, and other stakeholders. As part of the technology assessment, the system will receive a summary report that will be used to guide decisions regarding future purchases related to technology.

The Jefferson City School System Board of Education has spent a considerable amount of time over the last two years examining options for school system flexibility (Charter, IE2, Status Quo). At the most recent board retreat held in March 2014, a representative from the Georgia Department of Education presented information on charter systems. The Board of Education members are faced with the decision to declare which option to pursue by June 30, 2015. Pursuing a charter petition would increase opportunities for stakeholder involvement through the establishment of governance teams that are more involved in the decision-making process. Coupled with this conversation was information regarding the strategic planning process aligned to the Georgia School Boards Association's Vision Project presented by a representative from GSBA. While Jefferson City Schools have identified goals for improvement and completed other components of the strategic planning process, system and school leaders feel as though a more formalized approach to strategic planning would be beneficial to the system and its constituents.

GSBA's strategic planning process begins with a community engagement component to get input from stakeholders before the plan is developed. From there, the process provides a comprehensive structure to assist in developing a strategic plan that is aligned from the district level to the school level. While the system has a strategic plan in place,

moving forward with the GSBA model will allow the system to review goals and school improvement efforts in collaboration with a cross section of stakeholders at a number of levels during the process. The comprehensive model includes conversations with stakeholders that focus on moving the district forward. Completion of this process takes about 4 to 6 months, but system leaders feel that this is a necessary component for continuous improvement. Moving forward with this initiative will allow us to address the required action of soliciting meaningful involvement of all stakeholders to address budgetary and instructional challenges for 21st century learning.

Monitoring Progress and Evaluation of Current Actions

The Jefferson City School System has worked hard to increase opportunities for stakeholder involvement to address budgetary and instructional challenges for 21st century learning. As the student population increases both in number and diversity, it is critical that the system engage in conversations with a wide variety of stakeholders to ensure resources are maximized and quality educational services are provided to all students. The instructional services staff members work with school leaders to monitor progress toward this required action. System leaders have become more involved in school council, parent teacher organization, and other committee meetings to ensure that communication is more open regarding budget and instructional decisions, and stakeholders are more aware of opportunities for involvement in the decision-making process. Seeking input from a wide group of stakeholders has enabled the system to be more creative in expending funds and maximizing the use of resources to support teaching and learning. Having feedback from outside the system has proven to be beneficial to school leaders as they make decisions related to curriculum, instruction, assessment, and technology integration, which is evidenced through student performance data.

Challenges and Next Steps

It is important to Jefferson City Schools to continue to be a leader in the state and nation in terms of academic excellence. Financial challenges remain a barrier to implementing necessary changes to move the system forward. While the system has historically experienced high levels of academic achievement, as seen in state and national student achievement results, the shift in focus from academic achievement to student growth becomes a challenge for system and school leaders. We recognize the need to change our practices to ensure that we are making adequate growth with all groups of students.

In order for change to occur, it is critical that system and school leaders continue to work with a wide range of stakeholders to obtain feedback on areas needing improvement. We must equip our teachers with the necessary tools and resources to ensure they are able to move all groups of students forward as they progress from one grade to the next. One of our biggest concerns is making growth with our high level and gifted learners. While this particular group of students consistently achieve at high levels, we know it is our responsibility and obligation to provide them with quality, rigorous instruction that will help them make academic gains commensurate with their peers across the state. Engaging in the strategic planning process and pursuing a charter petition will serve the system well in making the adjustments needed to continue to be a leader in the state and to become recognized as a national leader because both initiatives provide an opportunity for an external review of the system's practices, procedures, and operations. Having an

external glance will enable system and school leaders, in collaboration with multiple stakeholders, to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats as part of the strategic planning process.

The strategic planning process facilitated by the Georgia School Boards Association is about a 4-6 month project. It is possible that the Jefferson City School Board of Education will submit a charter petition in November 2014.

5.2. Reviewer Response

Progress Response: Completed

Comments for Institution: After reviewing the district's response, AdvancED has rated this Required Action as complete. The district has taken the necessary steps to engage stakeholders in the decision-making process regarding the district's budget and its impact on instructional challenges. District leaders have been proactive in involving a diverse group of internal and external stakeholders in discussions. School Councils, PTOs, Title I annual planning have been venues to engage in meaningful dialogue and solicit stakeholder feedback. Additionally, the district shared its plan to pursue district charter status and will be using the Georgia School Boards Association to lead a formalized strategic planning process that begins with community engagement. The district has mobilized its efforts in response to the team's Required Action and is encouraged to continue its work in this area.