January 28-31, 2018

AdvancED®

AdvancED®
Engagement
Review Report

AdvancED® Performance Accreditation

» **Results for:**

Florence City Schools
P.O. Box 10
Florence, AL 35631

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Introduction

AdvancED Performance Accreditation and the Engagement Review

Accreditation is pivotal to leveraging education quality and continuous improvement. Using a set of rigorous research based standards, the accreditation process examines the whole institution—the program, the cultural context and the community of stakeholders—to determine how well the parts work together to meet the needs of learners. Through the AdvancED Accreditation Process, highly skilled and trained Engagement Review Teams gather first-hand evidence and information pertinent to evaluating an institution's performance against the research-based AdvancED Performance Standards. Using these Standards, Engagement Review Teams assess the quality of learning environments to gain valuable insights and target improvements in teaching and learning. AdvancED provides Standards that are tailored for all education providers so that the benefits of accreditation are universal across the education community.

Through a comprehensive review of evidence and information, our experts gain a broad understanding of institution quality. Using the Standards, the review team provides valuable feedback to institutions that helps to focus and guide each institution's improvement journey. Valuable evidence and information from other stakeholders, including students, also is obtained through interviews, surveys and additional activities.

As a part of the Engagement Review, stakeholders were interviewed by members of the Engagement Review Team to gain their perspectives on topics relevant to the institution's learning environment and organizational effectiveness. The feedback gained through the stakeholder interviews was considered with other evidences and data to support the findings of the Engagement Review. The following chart depicts the numbers of persons interviewed representative of various stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder Groups	Number
Board Members	2
Superintendents	1
Administrators/Central Office	24
Instructional Staff	88
Support Staff	10
Students	42
Parents/Community/Business Leaders	19
TOTAL	186

Once all of the information is compiled and reviewed, the team develops the Engagement Review Report and presents preliminary results to the institution. Results from the Engagement Review are reported in four ratings represented by colors. These ratings provide guidance and insight into an institution's continuous improvement efforts as described below:

Color	Rating	Description
Red	Needs Improvement	Identifies key areas that need more focused improvement efforts
Yellow	Emerging	Represents areas to enhance and extend current improvement efforts
Green	Meets Expectations	Pinpoints quality practices that meet the Standards

Color	Rating	Description
Blue	Exceeds Expectations	Demonstrates noteworthy practices producing clear results that exceed expectations

AdvancED Continuous Improvement System

The AdvancED Continuous Improvement System (CIS) provides a systemic fully integrated solution to help institutions map out and navigate a successful improvement journey. In the same manner that educators are expected to understand the unique needs of every learner and tailor the education experience to drive student success, every institution must be empowered to map out and embrace their unique improvement journey. AdvancED expects institutions to use the results and the analysis of data from various interwoven components for the implementation of improvement actions to drive education quality and improved student outcomes. While each improvement journey is unique, the journey is driven by key actions. AdvancED identifies three important components of a continuous improvement process and provides feedback on the components of the journey using a rubric that identifies the three areas to guide the improvement journey. The areas are as follows:

Commitment to Continuous Improvement	Rating
The institution has collected sufficient and quality data to identify school improvement needs.	Meets Expectations
Implications from the analysis of data have been identified and used for the development of key strategic goals.	Exceeds Expectations
The institution demonstrates the capacity to implement their continuous improvement journey.	Meets Expectations

Continuous Improvement Journey Narrative

Florence City Schools had clearly established a commitment to continuous improvement. The Engagement Review Team had abundant and meaningful evidence to inform their ratings for the Commitment to Continuous Improvement Rubric. Furthermore, embedded throughout the provided evidence and system presentations, references were made regarding the impact of the actions that were left in the 2013 AdvancED External Review Report as the catalyst for monumental changes in the Florence system. The Team identified ongoing validation that the system had deconstructed those actions and integrated them into the Florence City Instructional Roadmap. The Florence Strategic Plan contained strengths, challenges, and opportunities as well as specific goals. This plan did not include accountability measures, timeline, persons responsible, and cost factors. The Engagement Review Team recommended that the system continue to refine the existing plan as specific actions from the 2018 Engagement Review are added to ensure measurable progress for the designated goals.

Data analysis and application were strongly evident through presentations, interviews, and artifacts. Florence City leadership had developed a method of identifying areas for improvement based on data. Intentional design was the basis for addressing specific areas with follow-up data that identified growth outcomes. The 20 Behaviors of Student Engagement were based on data from eleot ®classroom observations. Specific steps for defining the problem, collaborating with internal stakeholders, setting growth targets, and video taping of Florence teachers modeling the 20 Behaviors of Engagement created both improved instruction and a mechanism for sustaining the desired teaching strategies. The archived videos provide sustainable coaching for new and existing teachers. This protocol can be replicated for future areas for improvement.

Florence demonstrated the system's capacity to initiate, implement, and sustain its continuous improvement journey. Well-established human, fiscal, and material resources were found to be largely systemic, systematic, and sustainable. Data Days are scheduled throughout the year for specified data work and professional learning to support the system's continuous improvement journey. Data collection and analysis from the business community, parents, and other external stakeholders was noted by the Team as an area for future growth.

AdvancED Standards Diagnostic Results

The AdvancED Performance Standards Diagnostic is used by the Engagement Review Team to evaluate the institution's effectiveness based on AdvancED's Performance Standards. The diagnostic consists of three components built around each of the three Domains: **Leadership Capacity**, **Learning Capacity** and **Resource Capacity**. Point values are established within the diagnostic and a percentage of the points earned by the institution for each Standard is calculated from the point values for each Standard. Results are reported within four ranges identified by the colors representing Needs Improvement (Red), Emerging (Yellow), Meets Expectations (Green), and Exceeds Expectations (Blue). The results for the three Domains are presented in the tables that follow.

Leadership Capacity Domain

The capacity of leadership to ensure an institution's progress toward its stated objectives is an essential element of organizational effectiveness. An institution's leadership capacity includes the fidelity and commitment to its 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 implement strategies that improve learner and educator performance.

Leadership Capacity Standards		Rating
1.1	The system commits to a purpose statement that defines beliefs about teaching and learning, including the expectations for learners.	Meets Expectations
1.2	Stakeholders collectively demonstrate actions to ensure the achievement of the system's purpose and desired outcomes for learners.	Exceeds Expectations
1.3	The system engages in a continuous improvement process that produces evidence, including measurable results of improving student learning and professional practice.	Exceeds Expectations
1.4	The governing authority establishes and ensures adherence to policies that are designed to support system effectiveness.	Exceeds Expectations
1.5	The governing authority adheres to a code of ethics and functions within defined roles and responsibilities.	Exceeds Expectations
1.6	Leaders implement staff supervision and evaluation processes to improve professional practice and organizational effectiveness.	Exceeds Expectations
1.7	Leaders implement operational processes and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness in support of teaching and learning.	Exceeds Expectations
1.8	Leaders engage stakeholders to support the achievement of the system's purpose and direction.	Meets Expectations
1.9	The system provides experiences that cultivate and improve leadership effectiveness.	Exceeds Expectations
1.10	Leaders collect and analyze a range of feedback data from multiple stakeholder groups to inform decision-making that results in improvement.	Meets Expectations
1.11	Leaders implement a quality assurance process for its institutions to ensure system effectiveness and consistency.	Meets Expectations

Learning Capacity Domain

The impact of teaching and learning is the primary expectation of every system and its institutions. The establishment of a learning culture built on high expectations for learning, along with quality programs and services, which include an analysis of results, are all key indicators of the system's impact on teaching and learning.

Learning Capacity Standards		Rating
2.1	Learners have equitable opportunities to develop skills and achieve the content and learning priorities established by the system.	Emerging
2.2	The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation and collaborative problem-solving.	Meets Expectations
2.3	The learning culture develops learners' attitudes, beliefs and skills needed for success.	Meets Expectations
2.4	The system has a formal structure to ensure learners develop positive relationships with and have adults/peers that support their educational experiences.	Meets Expectations
2.5	Educators implement a curriculum that is based on high expectations and prepares learners for their next levels.	Exceeds Expectations
2.6	The system implements a process to ensure the curriculum is aligned to standards and best practices.	Meets Expectations
2.7	Instruction is monitored and adjusted to meet individual learners' needs and the system's learning expectations.	Meets Expectations
2.8	The system provides programs and services for learners' educational future and career planning.	Exceeds Expectations
2.9	The system implements processes to identify and address the specialized needs of learners.	Exceeds Expectations
2.10	Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.	Exceeds Expectations
2.11	Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to demonstrable improvement of student learning.	Exceeds Expectations
2.12	The system implements a process to continuously assess its programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning.	Exceeds Expectations

Resource Capacity Domain

The use and distribution of resources align and support the needs of the system and institutions served. Systems ensure that resources are aligned with its stated purpose and direction and distributed equitably so that the needs of the system are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes support for professional learning for all staff. The system examines the allocation and use of resources to ensure appropriate levels of funding, sustainability, and system effectiveness.

Resource Capacity Standards		Rating
3.1	The system plans and delivers professional learning to improve the learning environment, learner achievement, and the system's effectiveness.	Exceeds Expectations
3.2	The system's professional learning structure and expectations promote collaboration and collegiality to improve learner performance and organizational effectiveness.	Exceeds Expectations
3.3	The system provides induction, mentoring, and coaching programs that ensure all staff members have the knowledge and skills to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness.	Exceeds Expectations

Resource Capacity Standards		Rating
3.4	The system attracts and retains qualified personnel who support the system's purpose and direction.	Meets Expectations
3.5	The system integrates digital resources into teaching, learning, and operations to improve professional practice, student performance, and organizational effectiveness.	Meets Expectations
3.6	The system provides access to information resources and materials to support the curriculum, programs, and needs of students, staff, and the system.	Exceeds Expectations
3.7	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning and use of resources in support of the system's purpose and direction.	Exceeds Expectations
3.8	The system allocates human, material, and fiscal resources in alignment with the system's identified needs and priorities to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness.	Exceeds Expectations

Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®) Results

The eProve™ Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®) is a learner-centric classroom observation tool that comprises 28 items organized in seven environments aligned with the AdvancED Standards. The eleot provides useful, relevant, structured, and quantifiable data on the extent to which students are engaged in activities and/or demonstrate knowledge, attitudes, and/or dispositions that are conducive to effective learning. Classroom observations are conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes. Results from eleot are reported on a scale of one to four based on the degree and quality of the engagement.

eleot® Observations	
Total Number of eleot® Observations	**55**
Environments	**Rating**
Equitable Learning Environment	3.03
Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs	2.65
Learners have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	3.51
Learners are treated in a fair, clear and consistent manner	3.62
Learners demonstrate and/or have opportunities to develop empathy/respect/appreciation for differences in abilities, aptitudes, backgrounds, cultures, and/or other human characteristics, conditions and dispositions	2.35
High Expectations Environment	3.04
Learners strive to meet or are able to articulate the high expectations established by themselves and/or the teacher	3.25
Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	3.25
Learners demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work	2.49
Learners engage in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks that require the use of higher order thinking (e.g., analyzing, applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	3.11
Learners take responsibility for and are self-directed in their learning	3.07
Supportive Learning Environment	3.42
Learners demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful	3.25
Learners take risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	3.40

eleot® Observations	
Total Number of eleot® Observations	**55**
Environments	**Rating**
Learners are supported by the teacher, their peers and/or other resources to understand content and accomplish tasks	3.55
Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher	3.47
Active Learning Environment	2.93
Learners' discussions/dialogues/exchanges with each other and the teacher predominate	3.25
Learners make connections from content to real-life experiences	2.35
Learners are actively engaged in the learning activities	3.36
Learners collaborate with their peers to accomplish/complete projects, activities, tasks and/or assignments	2.76
Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment	2.90
Learners monitor their own learning progress or have mechanisms whereby their learning progress is monitored	2.64
Learners receive/respond to feedback (from teachers/peers/other resources) to improve understanding and/or revise work	3.25
Learners demonstrate and/or verbalize understanding of the lesson/content	3.24
Learners understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed	2.45
Well-Managed Learning Environment	3.40
Learners speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other	3.69
Learners demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others	3.55
Learners transition smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another	3.02
Learners use class time purposefully with minimal wasted time or disruptions	3.35
Digital Learning Environment	2.22
Learners use digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	2.82
Learners use digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	2.11
Learners use digital tools/technology to communicate and/or work collaboratively for learning	1.73

eleot® Narrative

The Engagement Review Team conducted 55 classroom observations using the eleot® instrument during the onsite Engagement Review. The Team visited all schools and observed all grade levels and most content areas, including Florence Academy of Fine Arts. The overall rating from the 55 observations was 3.02 on a four-point scale. The Supportive Learning Environment (3.42) and Well-Managed Learning Environment (3.40) were the highest rated environments. The Digital Learning Environment (2.22) received the lowest overall rating.

In the past five years, Florence City addressed four areas from their previous accreditation review: 1) consistent grading practices, 2) professional learning, 3) data analysis to drive instruction, and 4) family engagement. The work that had been accomplished had a correlation and impact on the classroom observations that were conducted by the Team. Student engagement had been a major initiative in recent years. An example of differentiated instruction within one elementary classroom was noted. Some students were working with the teacher on skills, another group worked on learning a math concept using cubes on the floor, another group of two were testing math facts, some were working on a generic math program on iPads, and one student used his iPad to review a skill that was different from others. While the Team identified some differentiation of instruction, the practice was not found to be systemic. Equitable Learning Environment was generally addressed through specific programs and materials rather than within classroom instructional practices. A very significant implementation of

that environment was clearly demonstrated in the Florence Academy of Fine Arts where students were empowered to explore, create, challenge, innovate, and lead - completely implementing the Florence City Mission Statement in a classroom setting.

"Learners demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work" was not found to be systemic in the High Expectations Environment. Also, "Learners understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed" was identified as an area for future improvement in the Progress Monitoring Environment.

Team ratings for the Active Learning Environment averaged 2.93 on a four-point scale. While Florence City has worked vigilantly to increase student engagement, learner collaboration and making connections to real-life experiences were found to be areas for growth.

Well-Managed Learning Environment was a highly effective and consistent finding in classroom observations. Students were very polite, interacted respectfully with others, and used their classroom time effectively.

Florence City Schools had invested in technology in the past five years, providing a rich digital experience for all learners and educators. Students in an English class at the Freshman Center were working on a group inquiry project regarding poetry and figurative language. They were completing various tasks for the project using their Chromebooks, including research and creation of a presentation. In another eleot® observation, technology at Florence High School included an Anatomy class that uploaded student created documents to Canvas for grading.

In conclusion, the Team found well-managed and supportive classrooms that generally followed a traditional model, where elementary small group instruction was provided by the teacher at a designated table while other students were engaged predominately in paper and pencil worksheet activities that were not personalized according to need. Much of the use of technology focused on remedial/reinforcement computer reading and math skill software. An area of concern with this software was noted that a greater benefit could come from the teacher establishing how the software should be used effectively. An example was shared where a young student was using a software program to reinforce the past tense skill of adding "-ed" to verbs. He was simply looking for that ending and randomly choosing any word with an "-ed" ending as his answer. Another child was completing a worksheet on the same skill. Most sentences started with a noun and a verb followed, so he was systematically finding the second word and adding the "-ed" ending which was not always correct. These are examples that indicated a need for teacher direction and modeling of how to use the software to maximize outcomes. These activities lacked meaning and efficacy for some learners.

Findings

The chart below provides an overview of the institution ratings across the three Domains.
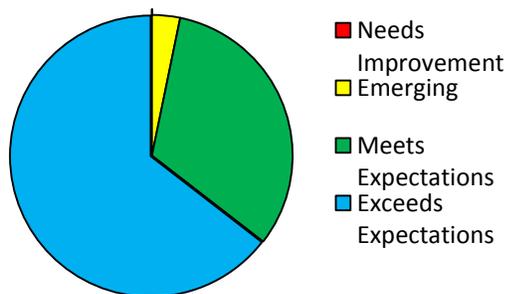
Rating	Number of Standards
Needs Improvement	0
Emerging	1
Meets Expectations	10
Exceeds Expectations	20

Powerful Practices

Powerful Practices reflect noteworthy observations and actions that have yielded clear results in student achievement or organizational effectiveness and are actions that exceed what is typically observed or expected in an institution.

Powerful Practice #1

Florence City Schools engages in a continuous improvement process that produces evidence, including measurable results of improving student learning and professional practice.

Primary Standard:
1.3

Evidence:
System and school leadership were fully committed to a data-driven, fluid, and ongoing process for continuous improvement that involved multiple stakeholder groups. As the Engagement Review Team examined evidence and conducted stakeholder interviews, it was evident that the system felt a deep responsibility to continually update and refine the continuous improvement process to more efficiently serve its student population. The ongoing commitment to continuously improve the learning process facilitated the individual learning of each of its students and provided a strong foundation for all students to achieve excellence. Further evidence included the 96% graduation rate and an impressive list of state and national awards and recognition.

Powerful Practice #2

Florence City Schools devised and implemented an exemplary system of data collection, analysis, and application.

Primary Standard:
2.11

Evidence:
Classroom observations, stakeholder interviews, leadership presentations, and written evidence showed the uniquely strong use and application of data to drive learning and student success. Florence City Schools had created an instructional framework based on four components: planning, instruction, assessment, and reflection with data practices embedded within each component.   Data Days were added to the system calendar to facilitate systemic collaboration to examine data and make instructional decisions. There was clear evidence that implemented actions were systematically and systemically monitored and revised to improve student learning throughout the year.

Powerful Practice #3

Florence City Schools demonstrated strategic and exemplary resource management and long-range planning through allocation of human, material, and fiscal resources that aligned with the system's identified needs and priorities to improve student performance and support the system's purpose, direction, and organizational effectiveness.

Primary Standard:

3.7 (Additional Standard 3.8)

Evidence:

Stakeholder interviews, recorded board meetings, and financial statements supported the positive use of resources for school facilities, technology initiatives, and students' learning needs. Visits to school facilities revealed clean, up-to-date buildings, excellent digital connectivity, and devices for all students. Seven Instructional Partners (one per school) were hired on ten-month contracts to promote effective instructional practices that support student achievement. Funding for those positions came from both the state and the City of Florence. Three districtwide Data Days, as well as, weekly Common Planning Time (CPT) are devoted to system-wide data analysis and examination of student learning needs. Instructional adjustments were made throughout the academic year to ensure student mastery of standards. Furthermore, instructional needs were addressed through the Falcon Learning Conversations Network (FLCN) which combined days for data and embedded professional learning. The system had created a video library of exemplars of instructional best practices featuring their own teachers.

Powerful Practice # 4

Florence City Schools' professional development promoted collaboration and collegiality resulting in exceptional professional learning and system effectiveness.

Primary Standard:

3.1 (Additional Standards 3.2, 3.3)

Evidence:

Evidence including archived videos, schedules of professional development, and stakeholder interviews revealed a five-year history of professional development topics including data collection, application, and questioning that had resulted in system practices that ensure student success, forward growth, and sustainability. Team members learned of the integrated work of several authors and consultants who guided the system's professional learning. Additionally, system and school personnel participated in Alabama Key Learners Network and other state initiatives to broaden their understanding and enhance system collaboration. Professional development in the past four years included assistant principals receiving specific training three times per year based on local needs and issues. The system reported how Florence now provides training for surrounding systems throughout the year. Furthermore, the system has created a training library of videos based on instructional practices that support the 20 Behaviors of Student Engagement for mentoring and coaching.

Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for Improvement are those actions that will guide and direct institutions to specific areas that are worthy of additional attention.

Opportunity for Improvement #1
Evaluate the current plan for gathering stakeholder feedback and develop a comprehensive process to involve all stakeholder groups in the improvement of the learning process.

Primary Standard:
1.8 (Additional Standard 1.10)

Evidence:
Surveys and interviews demonstrated a need to involve all stakeholder groups in the processes that influence student learning. While the system had worked toward greater involvement and buy-in from parent groups, the Team noted inconsistent effectiveness from school to school. This finding was also revealed in the system's ratings in the System Quality Factors Diagnostic.   A comprehensive, but flexible, system plan for parent involvement would allow each school to create a framework on which to build its own plan, while accommodating the differences in school populations. This program should involve parents in building students' positive attitudes, self-perceptions, and beliefs about learning, as evidenced in the eleot® ratings for the indicator in the Equitable Learning Environment that states "Learners demonstrate and/or have opportunities to develop empathy/respect/appreciation for differences in abilities, aptitudes, backgrounds, cultures, and/or other human characteristics, conditions, and dispositions." The plan should include rich learning experiences both in setting learning goals and in a variety of communication skills. In addition, the plan should contain a method to allow schools to share successes and expectations with other schools within the system to promote forward movement.

Improvement Priorities

Improvement priorities are developed to enhance the capacity of the institution to reach a higher level of performance and reflect the areas identified by the Engagement Review Team to have the greatest impact on improving student performance and organizational effectiveness.

Improvement Priority #1
Devise and implement a plan to provide differentiation of instruction in all grade levels.

Primary Standard: 2.1

Evidence:
Observations and documentation revealed that Florence City Schools had a very diverse student population. While some personalization of learning opportunities was prevalent but not systemic in elementary and middle grades, observations in the high school did not provide evidence of differentiation of instruction outside the areas of special education classrooms and elective classes. This finding was reflected in the eleot® rating for the indicator "Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs."

Interviews revealed that the district was proud of the ethnic and talent diversity within the community. In response to those diversities, Florence City Schools created many excellent opportunities to develop those talents, including the Florence Academy of Fine Arts. However, in visiting classrooms, the Engagement Review Team recognized that the system's next step is to define and implement differentiation for academic learners at all levels as a component of personalized learning. Florence City Schools had extensive digital resources that can be further utilized in personalizing instruction for all learners.

Accreditation Recommendation and Index of Educational Quality™ (IEQ™)

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

AdvancED provides the Index of Education Quality™ (IEQ™) as a holistic measure of overall performance based on a comprehensive set of standards and review criteria. A formative tool for improvement, it identifies areas of success as well as areas in need of focus. The IEQ is comprised of the Standards Diagnostic ratings from the three Domains: 1) Leadership Capacity; 2) Learning Capacity; and 3) Resource Capacity and the results of eleot classroom observations. The IEQ results are reported on a scale of 100 to 400 and provides information about how the institution is performing compared to expected criteria.

Institution IEQ	359.79

Conclusion Narrative

Florence City Schools (FCS), located in Florence, Alabama is a public system consisting of three K-4 elementary schools, one grade 5/6 middle school, one grade 7/8 junior high school, a grade 9 Freshman Center, a grade 10/12 high school, and the Florence Academy of Fine Arts for high school students. The system is seeking renewal of system accreditation.

Following the previous AdvancED External Review, FCS launched a plan for addressing the improvements from that review. It was clear that the work that was collaborated and achieved in the past five years had impacted the system and its students and personnel. The current superintendent, a native of Florence, is currently in his first year as superintendent, but has been in several positions within FCS leadership for some years. Therefore, he played an important role in creating and implementing changes before becoming superintendent. The FCS central office staff had a high level of collegiality and dedication which was very evident to the Team prior to the onsite and throughout the review. FCS understood continuous improvement at an exemplary level. The high leadership capacity was very evident as noted in the methodology used to assess areas for improvement and collaboratively and intentionally design protocols that led to successful outcomes. The system was data-driven, solution-oriented, and student-focused.

The Engagement Review Team rated Resource Management as highly effective based on the successful work that had been done for that quality factor. The acquisition of funding for many projects provided new programs for students, hiring of academic support personnel, upgrading of digital resources and infrastructure, and construction of a new junior high school that is underway. The establishment of the state-of-the-art program known as Florence Academy of Fine Arts (FAFA) changed career options for students. Data supported that impact on both career readiness and an increased graduation rate for the five years of its existence. The City of Florence was instrumental in much local funding for programs in Florence City Schools which provided evidence that the community supported the schools and valued the importance of high quality educational experiences for all students.

Two very well-established processes for FCS were the collection, analysis, and use of data and the powerful professional learning programs that existed in the system and its schools. These two strengths were foundational pieces to the overall excellence of the system. Those successful programs impacted the System and School Quality Factors across all seven areas. The Team applauded the system and its personnel for taking their success in these two areas and sharing that knowledge with educators in surrounding areas and beyond to national level

conferences.

The Engagement Review Team viewed two governing board videos, examined online board agendas, and interviewed two members of the Board. The findings from the AdvancED Effective Board Observation Tool varied in ratings from Very Evident, Evident, Somewhat Evident, and Not Observed. For systems to be in continuous improvement, all governing board members need to be in continuous improvement to be a part of a system's continuous improvement. An example of current disagreement among board members centered on the structure of the existing Strategic Plan. Once FCS addresses the actions from the Engagement Review, leadership and board will need to revise and/or recreate a strategic planning model that supports continuous improvement. As one team member shared, "A strategic plan is a fluid document. As such, it is a lot like water and sometimes the forward motion changes direction. Therefore, the plan should change direction if necessary."

While a broad spectrum of improvement was found during the Engagement Review process, the Team determined from its findings that included 186 stakeholder interviews, examination of a plethora of evidence, survey data, and classroom observations that there was an area for improvement that could potentially impact the success of FCS students and the community. There was a disconnect between high expectations for the students and the beliefs and attitudes of the students themselves and their families. Throughout the review, the Team heard concerns that students needed to believe in their own abilities. They needed to want success as emphatically as the system wanted it for the students. The Team realized that students needed to understand their career options and what skills were needed so they would value their daily educational experiences. A broad awareness of career options, greater exposure to industry, and a deeper sense of hope were missing pieces that could potentially drive student buy-in and raise achievement even higher. Additionally, this included performance across all classroom settings. System surveys indicated a need for a more meaningful connection with every parent, not just to attend events, but to deeply understand the importance of setting high expectations for their children and to partner with the schools in encouraging their children to be hopeful, to work hard, and to believe in themselves. The system spoke of the pursuit of a focus on social and emotional development as a possible next step. How the system approaches this action will be important. To personalize the learning experience for each student would suggest the need to personalize the relationship between each parent and the system and its schools. The Team acknowledged its belief that FCS can and would design and implement a meaningful and successful personalized learning process to maximize learning for every student. Equity of learning was found to be at the core of this action.

Florence City Schools clearly wanted the best outcome for every child. Through collaborative discussions and intentional planning, those outcomes can become reality. As the system designs its continuous improvement process for the coming years, it will be important to create a meaningful strategic plan that aligns with and supports a continuous improvement journey rather than a finite plan that expires.

Strong leadership, a dedicated teaching staff, fiscal accountability, community support, a collaborative culture, and love for children were alive and thriving in Florence City Schools. The future is bright and optimistic for the students who are fortunate to receive a rich and vibrant education in a system that is "Giving you tomorrow… Today."

Next Steps

The results of the Engagement Review provide the next step to guide the improvement journey of the institution in their efforts to improve the quality of educational opportunities for all learners. The findings are aligned to research-based criteria designed to improve student learning and organizational effectiveness. The feedback provided in the Accreditation Engagement Review Report will assist the institution in reflecting on their current improvement efforts and to adapt and adjust their plans to continuously strive for improvement.

Upon receiving the Accreditation Engagement Review Report the institution is encouraged to implement the following steps:

- Review and share the findings with stakeholders.
- Develop plans to address the Improvement Priorities identified by the Engagement Review Team.
- Use the findings and data from the report to guide and strengthen the institution's continuous improvement efforts.
- Celebrate the successes noted in the report
- Continue your Improvement Journey

Team Roster

The Engagement Review Teams are comprised of professionals with varied backgrounds and professional experiences. All Lead Evaluators and Engagement Review Team members complete AdvancED training and eleot® certification to provide knowledge and understanding of the AdvancED tools and processes. The following professionals served on the Engagement Review Team:

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
Mary Anne Hipp, Lead Evaluator	Mary Anne Hipp has committed her education career to teaching and learning, having served as a Kindergarten and elementary classroom teacher both in public and private education, as well as an elementary principal for a combined 51 years. Her passion for excellence and continuous improvement has been the driving force of her service as an AdvancED System Lead Evaluator for the past nine years, serving public school systems, faith-based systems, Catholic Dioceses, and Education Service Agencies across America and in Latin America. She holds degrees and certifications in Music Education, Kindergarten, and Elementary Education and has a Masters + 30 Degree in Education Administration. In addition to accreditation work, Ms. Hipp has served on various community civic, and education boards in the United States and Latin America and currently serves as a consultant for School Board Development.
Dr. Dennis Willingham, Associate Lead Evaluator	Dr. Dennis Willingham is the Director of Personnel Evaluation and Elementary Schools at the Walker County Board of Education. He coordinates and supervises evaluation (central office, principals, and teachers), RtI, ARI, library media, the system handbook, and the system calendar, along with assisting in curriculum/ instruction. Dr. Willingham taught special education and social sciences for 6 years at all levels (elementary/ middle/ high school). He was an assistant principal for 5 years at all levels (elementary/ middle/ high school) and a principal for 10 years at a K-8 school. He is an adjunct professor at the University of West Alabama in the Instructional Leadership Program.

Dr. Willingham is a certified AdvancED Reviewer and serves on accreditation teams for schools and school systems. He also serves on the Department of Human Resources (DHR) Quality Assurance Committee and the Selective Service Committee. Dr. Willingham was elected to two consecutive terms as the President of the Walker County Principals Association. He most recently presented at the Literacy Summit at the University of Alabama, in conjunction with AdvancED and the State Department of Education. Dr. Willingham earned his B.S., M.S, and Ed.S. Degrees from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and his Ed.D. from Samford University. |

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
Alma Huston	Alma Huston has been in education for 38 years in both public and private settings. She began as an elementary teacher and has been a high school teacher, dean of students, high school principal and director of counseling and student services. She holds a Masters in Educational Psychology and Counseling and another in Administration as well as additional hours in early childhood. She began serving for AdvancEd in the early 90's and began as a lead in 1999, serving every year since then. She is currently retired but occasionally does college and career counseling as a consultant.
Martha Cieplinski	Martha Cieplinski retired from Marion County Public Schools, Ocala, FL, after 47 years of service as a science teacher and AP for Curriculum. Her professional experience includes being the director of a charter military high school, and she has extensive experience in virtual education. She has a BSE in Biology and English, and a Masters in Educational Leadership. Having served as an AdvancED Lead Evaluator since 2007, Mrs. Cieplinski is currently serving her second term as a member of the AdvancEd Florida Council.
Lauren Parker	Lauren Parker has been in the field of education for 17 years serving 10 of those years as a secondary English Language Arts teacher (both public and private education) and the last four years as an administrator at a Pre-K through 12 rural school. She spent two years teaching abroad in Central and South America. She has been a part of the AdvancED review process in two different systems and in one private school and was on the leadership team during all three reviews. She holds a Master's degree and an Educational Specialist degree (Ed.S.) in Instructional Leadership and is currently pursuing a doctorate specializing in educational leadership in rural areas. Her professional interests include whole child education and the constructivist approach to learning.

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About AdvancED

AdvancED is a non-profit, non-partisan organization serving the largest community of education

professionals in the world. Founded on more than 100 years of work in continuous improvement,

AdvancED combines the knowledge and expertise of a research institute, the skills of a management

consulting firm and the passion of a grassroots movement for educational change to empower

Pre-K-12 schools and school systems to ensure that all learners realize their full potential.