

# Report of the External Review Team for City of Cape Coral Municipal Charter 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

The External Review visit to the City of Cape Coral Municipal Charter School System (CCCMCSS) located in Cape Coral, Florida, began on Sunday, May 1 and continued through the afternoon of Wednesday, May 4, 2016. The External Review Team (Team) consisted of five trained and experienced educators, three from within Florida and one each from Alabama and Virginia.

Preparation for the visit to CCCMCSS started in early January when contact was made with the superintendent and a schedule for the visit was drafted. The Team workspace was developed and continually updated with pertinent documents and referred to throughout the planning process. Emails and telephone calls quickly established an effective working framework between the Lead Evaluator and the superintendent and later among Team members. Team members started their required training and certification for eProve™ Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool™ (eleot™) certification in February. A conference call with Team members was held in early April to review all aspects of the review and address concerns and questions. Following the conference call, weekly emails from the Lead Evaluator kept Team members focused and reminded of plans and tasks. Team members reviewed numerous documents reflecting practices in the system and the schools through the use of the workspace and the websites of the school system and each of the four schools. Each Team member was asked to concentrate on one of the five AdvancED Standards

based on one's stated interest and/or experience but was also advised of the responsibility of rating the school system on all of the Standards by the end of the review. This off-site preparation enabled Team members to begin their work in Cape Coral with a basic understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the system.

The Team arrived in Cape Coral on Sunday in time for an on-site work session at 3:30 pm. The Team stayed at the Westin Cape Coral Resort which provided excellent accommodations including a spacious workroom for evening work sessions. Later that afternoon, the superintendent welcomed the Team and provided an overview of the school system. Members of the system's governing board, several other key leaders of the system and building administrators then joined the Team for dinner at a local restaurant offering an opportunity to chat informally about the system. Following dinner, the Team continued its work session agenda back at the hotel.

Throughout the External Review, Team members were transported to meeting and interview sites by key members of the system staff, providing an ongoing opportunity for additional informal discussion and clarification statements. On Monday morning, a presentation was made to the Team which highlighted the progress of the school system relative to each of the AdvancED Standards. Interviews with the superintendent, staff members, parents and members of the governing board afforded the Team opportunities to probe into statements made during presentations and verify system-wide progress. Following dinner at the hotel that evening, the Team held another collaborative work session to review findings, discuss concerns, review the eleot™ form and protocols and prepare for the visits to schools.

On Tuesday, members of the Team visited all four of the schools which make up CCCMCSS. During the school visits, Team members interviewed the principal and the leadership team at each site and observed students in a total of 56 classrooms. That evening, the Team held another work session to discuss the interviews and observations, build consensus about the system's areas of strength and concern and arrive individually at final ratings of all Standard Indicators.

On Wednesday, the Team concluded its work by completing statements of Powerful Practices, Opportunities for Improvement and Improvement Priorities and delivering an Exit Report to the board.

Staff members and stakeholders of the City of Cape Coral Municipal Charter School System displayed outstanding hospitality throughout the External Review. A sense of openness and transparency was evident among staff members of the schools in both informal conversations and during formal interviews. Responses to Team inquiries were immediate, open, professional and thoughtful. Logistics for the visit were carefully planned to ensure that the members of the External Review Team were where they needed to be when scheduled and that all documentation was readily accessible.

CCCMCSS and each of the schools were well prepared for the Team's visit. Surveys of 2,027 staff members, students and parents provided important documentation of stakeholder opinions. Interviews with 124 stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, principals, members of the system staff and members of the governing board provided clear expressions of opinions about the school system. Staff members in the schools were knowledgeable about and supportive of the Team's work, exhibited a high degree of pride in their

school and were interested in feedback to guide improvement of the teaching and learning services that they provided their students.

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	6
Administrators	8
Instructional Staff	26
Students	64
Parents/Community/Business Leaders	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>

# Results

## Teaching and Learning Impact

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Standard 3 - Teaching and Assessing for Learning

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
3.1	The system's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at the next level.	3.20	2.68
3.2	Curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout the system are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice.	2.00	2.50
3.3	Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	2.80	2.55
3.4	System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	2.40	2.73
3.5	The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.	2.20	2.57
3.6	Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning.	3.00	2.48
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	2.00	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.	4.00	2.92
3.9	The system designs and evaluates structures in all schools whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the student's school who supports that student's educational experience.	2.00	2.40
3.10	Grading and reporting are based on clearly defined criteria that represent the attainment of content knowledge and skills and are consistent across grade levels and courses.	2.20	2.53
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	2.20	2.64
3.12	The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	2.20	2.66

### Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
5.1	The system establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	2.60	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.	2.20	2.41
5.3	Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.	1.40	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.	1.80	2.46
5.5	System and school leaders monitor and communicate comprehensive information about student learning, school performance, and the achievement of system and school improvement goals to stakeholders.	2.80	2.72

### Student Performance Diagnostic

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

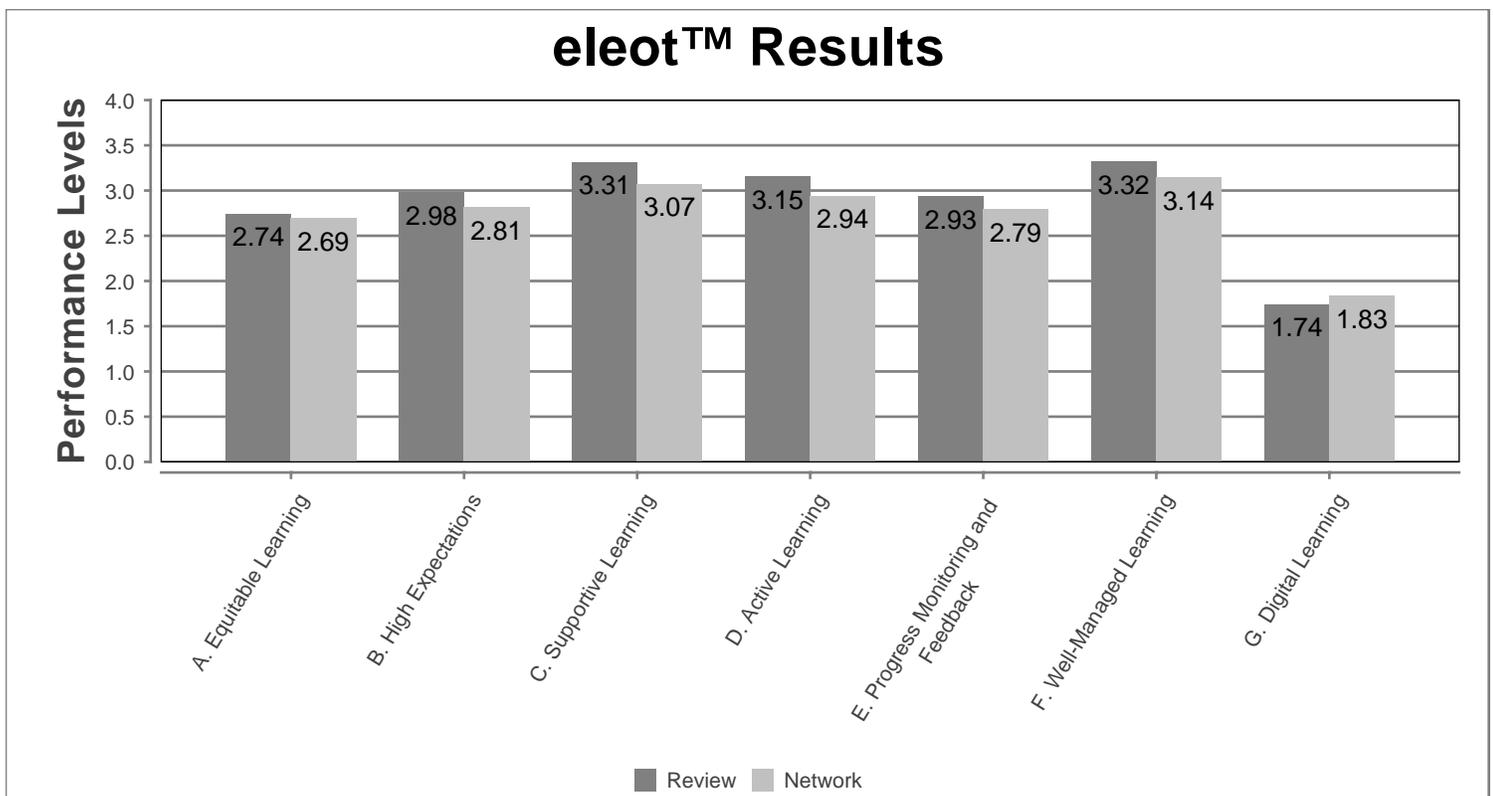
learning, and closing gaps in achievement among subpopulations of students are all important indicators for evaluating overall student performance.

Evaluative Criteria	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
Assessment Quality	3.00	3.28
Test Administration	3.00	3.50
Equity of Learning	2.00	2.44
Quality of Learning	3.00	2.97

## Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™)

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

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



The External Review Team visited classrooms in each of the four schools in the City of Cape Coral Municipal Charter School System. A total of 56 classrooms were observed using eleot which focuses on student behaviors and actions rather than monitoring teacher performance. Every member of the Team had previously been trained and had passed a certification exam to use eleot. Each team member conducted multiple observations during the school visits, rating student involvement and reactions on 30 observable behaviors

based on a four-point scale. Those 30 ratings for each observation were then combined to yield a composite score for all observations completed by the Team throughout the school system. Those composite scores were then reported in seven different categories or "learning environments." Observations of classrooms were conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes each as required by eleot protocols.

In general terms, the school buildings were very well maintained and clean and appeared to provide an excellent teaching and learning environment for staff and students. Students appeared to be very well behaved and not bothered by visitors in their rooms. Staff members spoke with pride about their school and expressed confidence in their school's ability to provide a safe, secure and caring learning atmosphere for students and staff. Ratings for CCCMCSS were very impressive with all environments except one being above the average of all schools in the AdvancED Network. The one environment which did not exceed that average was that of a "Digital Learning Environment."

The learning environment rated the highest (most effective) was that of a "Well-Managed Learning Environment." Its rating was a 3.32/4.00 (3.32 on a scale which ranges from a low of 1.00 to a high of 4.00). This environment pertains to the interaction between the teachers and students, collaboration among peers and cooperation and adherence to classroom rules and procedures. Classroom environments were very positive and conducive to staff and students. This highest rated behavior in this area was the manner in which students spoke and interacted respectfully with teachers and their peers. Students were also observed following classroom rules and working well while in small groups. During an observation in a Kindergarten classroom, a girl became noticeably upset in a small group writing activity when the marking pen that she selected out of a basket turned out to be dried up. She whimpered out loud "My marker doesn't work. Now I have no marker!" One of her classmates immediately came to her rescue saying, "Here, you can use mine."

The learning environment which was rated second highest was that of a "Supportive Learning Environment." Its rating was 3.31/4.00 on the same scale. This environment relates to the manner in which students express a positive attitude about their classroom setting and learning experiences, if they appear willing to take risks in learning without fear of negative feedback and if they receive support and assistance appropriate to their level of ability. The strongest rating within this environment was found in the positive attitude that students displayed toward their teacher, their assignments and the classroom experience in general. Related to this area of strength, a parent stated during an interview, "I love the personal student attention."

The learning environment which was rated third highest was that of an "Active Learning Environment." Its rating was 3.15/4.00 on the eleot scale. This environment relates to the engagement of students in the classroom activities, involvement in discussions with the teacher and/or classmates and connections of the lesson content to real-life experiences. During one observation, a 5th grade teacher asked her students, "OK guys, how can we use this (classroom activity) in the real world?" Active engagement was the norm, but being able to connect their classroom work to real-life applications was identified as a relative weakness. The observable behavior of "students being actively engaged in learning activities" received the highest value in this environment.

The learning environment which was rated fourth highest was that of a "High Expectations Learning

Environment." Its rating was 2.98/4.00 on the same scale. This environment relates to the degree of challenge or rigor of assignments, the use of higher order thinking skills, and the availability of examples of excellent student work or grading rubrics to guide students. High expectations for student success were evident in all classrooms observed.

The learning environment rated fifth highest was that of a "Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment." Its rating was 2.93/4.00 on the eleot scale. This environment addresses the level of teacher feedback to help the student understand the lesson, if students are able to revise their work based on that feedback, how the students demonstrate understanding and if students generally understand how their work will be graded. Most observations noted very positive interaction between the teacher and students, featuring positive feedback, questioning and suggestions for improvement. The area rated the lowest in this environment deals with the student's understanding of how their work will be assessed by the teacher.

The learning environment rated second from the lowest was that of an "Equitable Learning Environment." Its rating by the Team was 2.74/4.00 on the eleot scale. This environment pertains to the level of differentiated learning opportunities in which the students are engaged, their access to discussions, resources and other activities, fair and consistent application of classroom rules and opportunities to learn about the background and cultural differences among classmates. The lowest rating in this environment was the availability of opportunities for youngsters to learn about the background and cultural differences among classmates.

The learning environment rated the lowest (least effective) was "Digital Learning Environment." Its rating was 1.74/4.00. This standard relates to the use of instructional technology by students to gather and use data for learning, conduct research or solve problems and communicate and work collaboratively with others. In general, the team noted minimal use of technology by students in most classroom settings. In classrooms where technology was being used, it was most often used by only the teacher for presentation purposes.

The focus of the eleot classroom observation tool and the AdvancED Standards have many similarities. One such point of alignment pertains to the availability of differentiated learning opportunities. Standard 3 calls for teachers to personalize instruction by differentiating assignments to match students' learning needs. The Team noted that the school system rated this area as a relative strength but did not observe much differentiation during classroom observations.

Another area in which the focus of eleot and the Standards are closely aligned is in the area of cultural awareness. During classroom observations, Team members looked for evidence that students have ongoing opportunities to learn about their own and others' culture and background. This concern is closely related to Standard 4 which addresses support systems to meet the physical, social and emotional needs of students. In this area, findings of relative weakness were evident during classroom and was also rated on the system's Self Assessment as a need of emphasis.

The Standards and eleot indicators are also closely aligned when it comes to collaboration and group work. Standard 3 addresses the degree to which the school system operates as a collaborative learning organization. The Team found the schools and particularly the school system does not make a practice of

working together in teams but found collaborative group work to be a popular instructional strategy in many classrooms.

Close alignment between the Standards and eleot indicators can also be seen in the area of instructional technology. AdvancED Standard 4 addresses the provision of appropriate technology tools in the schools and was rated as a need of the system. Likewise, during observations Team members looked for opportunities for students using technology. In general, the Team noted minimal use of technology by students and suggests this as an area in need of review.

Lastly, close alignment between the Standards and the focus of eleot can be seen in the area of instructional processes in the classroom. AdvancED Standard 3 addresses the expectation for teachers to inform students of how their work will be graded, display exemplars or models depicting excellence for assignments, use of multiple means of assessment and provide immediate feedback. Similar to the goal of that Standard, eleot observations monitor the availability of exemplars in the classroom and the level of difficulty of lessons. Also noted are students' responses to teacher feedback. While instructional processes were noted as a relative strength of the school system, classroom observations revealed little or no use of exemplars, but meaningful teacher feedback was a characteristic of most classrooms.

In conclusion, members of the External Review Team were impressed by expressions of school and community pride during the visits in the schools. Staff members were positive and enthusiastic about the current focus on improving student learning throughout the school system. The Team encourages CCCMCSS to review these and all results of the classroom observations and use that information to help guide future decisions about classroom activities and instructional strategies.

**eleot™ Data Summary**

<b>A. Equitable Learning</b>			<b>%</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Very Evident</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Somewhat Evident</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
1.	2.82	Has differentiated learning opportunities and activities that meet her/his needs	26.79%	35.71%	30.36%	7.14%
2.	3.46	Has equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	55.36%	37.50%	5.36%	1.79%
3.	3.07	Knows that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied	28.57%	53.57%	14.29%	3.57%
4.	1.61	Has ongoing opportunities to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/differences	3.57%	5.36%	39.29%	51.79%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.74</b>						

<b>B. High Expectations</b>			<b>%</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Very Evident</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Somewhat Evident</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
1.	3.32	Knows and strives to meet the high expectations established by the teacher	39.29%	53.57%	7.14%	0.00%
2.	3.38	Is tasked with activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	44.64%	48.21%	7.14%	0.00%
3.	1.91	Is provided exemplars of high quality work	5.36%	19.64%	35.71%	39.29%
4.	3.25	Is engaged in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks	39.29%	46.43%	14.29%	0.00%
5.	3.02	Is asked and responds to questions that require higher order thinking (e.g., applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	30.36%	46.43%	17.86%	5.36%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.98</b>						

<b>C. Supportive Learning</b>			<b>%</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Very Evident</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Somewhat Evident</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
1.	3.43	Demonstrates or expresses that learning experiences are positive	58.93%	26.79%	12.50%	1.79%
2.	3.55	Demonstrates positive attitude about the classroom and learning	62.50%	32.14%	3.57%	1.79%
3.	3.23	Takes risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	33.93%	57.14%	7.14%	1.79%
4.	3.43	Is provided support and assistance to understand content and accomplish tasks	55.36%	35.71%	5.36%	3.57%
5.	2.89	Is provided additional/alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level of challenge for her/his needs	21.43%	53.57%	17.86%	7.14%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.31</b>						

<b>D. Active Learning</b>			<b>%</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Very Evident</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Somewhat Evident</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
1.	3.41	Has several opportunities to engage in discussions with teacher and other students	60.71%	23.21%	12.50%	3.57%
2.	2.36	Makes connections from content to real-life experiences	16.07%	32.14%	23.21%	28.57%
3.	3.70	Is actively engaged in the learning activities	73.21%	23.21%	3.57%	0.00%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.15</b>						

<b>E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback</b>			<b>%</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Very Evident</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Somewhat Evident</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
1.	3.02	Is asked and/or quizzed about individual progress/learning	39.29%	33.93%	16.07%	10.71%
2.	3.36	Responds to teacher feedback to improve understanding	51.79%	35.71%	8.93%	3.57%
3.	3.29	Demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of the lesson/content	37.50%	55.36%	5.36%	1.79%
4.	1.93	Understands how her/his work is assessed	3.57%	30.36%	21.43%	44.64%
5.	3.05	Has opportunities to revise/improve work based on feedback	39.29%	37.50%	12.50%	10.71%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.93</b>						

<b>F. Well-Managed Learning</b>			<b>%</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Very Evident</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Somewhat Evident</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
1.	3.66	Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers	71.43%	23.21%	5.36%	0.00%
2.	3.46	Follows classroom rules and works well with others	48.21%	50.00%	1.79%	0.00%
3.	2.89	Transitions smoothly and efficiently to activities	35.71%	37.50%	7.14%	19.64%
4.	3.18	Collaborates with other students during student-centered activities	55.36%	23.21%	5.36%	16.07%
5.	3.43	Knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences	50.00%	42.86%	7.14%	0.00%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.32</b>						

G. Digital Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	1.79	Uses digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	10.71%	17.86%	10.71%	60.71%
2.	1.66	Uses digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	10.71%	10.71%	12.50%	66.07%
3.	1.77	Uses digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning	14.29%	12.50%	8.93%	64.29%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 1.74</b>						

## Findings

### Improvement Priority

Develop and implement a system-wide collaborative process to horizontally and vertically align the curriculum. (Indicator 3.2)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.2

#### Evidence and Rationale

Stakeholder interviews, lesson plan evidence and the lack of a consistent curriculum mapping process revealed that while some teachers on the same grade level take it upon themselves to collaborate and improve learning, it is not a system-wide expectation. The area of curriculum alignment was also noted as a relative weakness in the system’s Self Assessment. During the system’s presentations on Standards 1, 2 and 4, it was stated that the development of a curriculum with vertical and horizontal articulation was an identified need for all levels, K-12. During interviews with parents, one mother stated, “We have two elementary schools, both feeding into one middle school; you would expect them both to have the same fundamental curriculum and activities. They are not; kids go into the middle school with vastly different backgrounds.” During an interview with the leadership team in one of the system’s two elementary schools, it was asked if the retention criteria for kindergarten and 1st grade was the same at both schools. The response given was “We don’t know.” However, one elementary principal stated, “We try to get together three to four times per year (to share information between schools).”

Vertical collaboration within disciplines can improve student success and increase the depth of understanding at subsequent grade levels. Horizontal collaboration among subject/grade levels strengthens and supports all learning goals. Furthermore, research has revealed that decisions about curricular alignment are more likely to

be implemented with fidelity if they are made collaboratively. Caution must be taken, however, to ensure that the schools' history of successful academic achievement is not adversely impacted by efforts to achieve curricular alignment.

### **Improvement Priority**

Implement and monitor the use of system-wide tools and procedures to include formative assessments and collaborative analysis of data to provide targeted instructional support and to enhance instruction. (Indicator 5.2, Indicator 5.3, SF2. Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis, SP2. Test Administration, SP4. Equity of Learning)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 5.3

#### Evidence and Rationale

A review of the artifacts and responses to questions during interviews indicated the lack of written protocols for the collection and analysis of student data throughout the system. Evidence further revealed that formative assessments were used only on a limited basis. Staff members in each school indicated that they periodically review student performance data. Based on further review, it was noted that achievement gaps exist between sub-groups of students. Interview responses and a close review of artifacts provided by the system indicated a need to provide additional training for teachers in the use of data, particularly formative assessments at the classroom, school and system levels to monitor student growth. During the system's presentation on Standard 3, it was stated that staff members "haven't been trained to analyze data and use that information to improve classroom instruction." The need for additional staff training was also mentioned in the presentation of Standard 5. Also, additional training of all staff members regarding the use and interpretation of student data was an area of need identified through staff surveys.

Schools which review and analyze data, including comparison and trend data, are empowered to raise their level of effectiveness by having accurate measures of its current reality, knowing the level to which it aspires and determining what changes are needed to reach that higher level of performance. The implementation and monitoring of system-wide protocols for the collection and collaborative analysis of student data to identify and target unique learning needs will contribute to verifiable student readiness for the next level and continued student success.

### **Opportunity For Improvement**

Develop and implement a systemic plan to coordinate learning support services to meet the unique needs of all students.

(Indicator 3.12)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.12

#### Evidence and Rationale

Students learn in different ways and the effective school system identifies these learning needs and provides variations and accommodations to enhance the learning of all students. While evidence documents relating to services provided by CCCMCSS at the elementary level identified a variety of services, the documents did not identify services provided by the middle or high schools. Furthermore, classroom observations identified minimal differentiation of learning opportunities at the secondary level and stakeholder interviews confirmed that less emphasis on differentiation exists after elementary grades. This area of support for students was highlighted as a relative weakness in the system's Self Assessment. Statements made during interviews at the schools indicate that the review and analysis of data and then applying that information to planning for instruction was an area of need throughout the system. One of the lowest scores in parent surveys was found related to individualizing instruction for students. Additionally, adjusting teaching techniques to meet the unique learning needs of students was rated low in student surveys.

To help all students succeed in the classroom, schools must ensure that all teachers continually use available data to guide appropriate individualization of instructional strategies to address students' unique learning needs, proficiency levels and learning styles.

### **Opportunity For Improvement**

Ensure that all staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning aligned with the system's needs.

(Indicator 3.7, Indicator 3.11)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.11

#### Evidence and Rationale

Interviews with administrative and instructional staff revealed that CCCMCSS currently uses a professional development model that is based primarily on individual teacher goals rather than system or school needs. The A.P.P.L.E.S. program for "new teachers" and "new to Florida teachers" provides mentors and a solid foundation for professional development for the first two years of employment. Professional development after that can be in the form of seminars, online courses, conferences or in-house meetings and training. Continuing education required by the state of Florida for certified personnel is appropriately provided and reported to the state's Department of Education. The need for a more unified system of professional development was also highlighted by staff members during the presentation on Standards 1,3 and 5 and in the system's Self Assessment.

Highly effective school systems annually update and provide a coordinated program of professional development aligned with the system's needs. Through such a program all staff members will build capacity and expertise, critical to the continuous improvement of the services to the students and patrons of the community.

### **Powerful Practice**

The exemplary parental volunteer program leads to outstanding family engagement and commitment to the

school system.

(Indicator 3.8)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.8

Evidence and Rationale

A review of survey results indicates that over 84% of elementary, 55% of middle school and 64% of high school parents strongly agree or agree that the schools are meeting their expectations. This strong favorable evaluation is in part a reflection of parents' participation in volunteer programs at all schools as well as the varied ways the schools communicate with parents. All parents are required to volunteer for at least 30 hours per year. An online sign-up system provides an efficient volunteer registration process. Parents can become engaged in classrooms, cafeterias, media centers, athletics and/or in office settings. The volunteer experience provides an avenue for informal sharing of ideas and opinions between parents and staff members and creates a culture that includes all stakeholders as part of the same team. As one parent stated, "My school cares about parent involvement. I am well-received when working in the school."

Meaningful engagement of stakeholders is a hallmark of most effective organizations. Through participation in the volunteer program, parents of CCCMCSS students are provided meaningful opportunities to work closely with the schools to accomplish the goal of supporting the educational needs of all students. Because of the volunteer program, the ongoing culture of collaboration between parents and the schools creates organizational momentum which encourages, supports and propels effective initiatives.

# Leadership Capacity

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

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

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

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

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

## Standard 1 - Purpose and Direction

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
1.1	The system engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a system-wide purpose for student success.	2.60	2.62
1.2	The system ensures that each school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	2.00	2.63
1.3	The school leadership and staff at all levels of the system commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning and supports challenging, equitable educational programs and learning experiences for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills.	2.80	2.89
1.4	Leadership at all levels of the system implement a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	2.00	2.61

## Standard 2 - Governance and Leadership

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools.	3.00	2.95
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	3.00	2.92
2.3	The governing body ensures that the leadership at all levels has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.	3.60	3.12
2.4	Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction.	3.00	2.97
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction.	2.80	2.67

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice in all areas of the system and improved student success.	2.80	2.76

## Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic

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

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

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

## Findings

### Opportunity For Improvement

Develop and implement a systematic process to review and revise distinct vision and mission statements to clearly communicate the system's purpose.

(Indicator 1.1, Indicator 1.2)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 1.1

#### Evidence and Rationale

The current vision and mission statements are used interchangeably in various documents including the PowerPoint slides of presentations to the External Review Team, the system's strategic plan and the Self Assessment report. A clear distinction is not apparent between system vision and mission statements, school mottos and belief statements. During interviews with parents, many could not remember or describe the system's vision and mission statements; those who could, often confused which was which.

A clear statement of a school system purpose communicates a common direction for the organization to all

stakeholders. Periodic review of school and system mission and vision statements assists in maintaining a clear focus and awareness of desired goals. Highly effective school systems ensure open stakeholder involvement throughout that process. By such inclusion, a sense of ownership in the success of the organization is often developed resulting in loyalty, support and dedication.

# 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.	2.80	2.92
4.2	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, educational programs, and system operations.	2.80	2.93
4.3	The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	4.00	3.05
4.4	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system.	2.80	2.63

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.5	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system.	2.00	2.74
4.6	The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	2.00	2.54
4.7	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of support systems to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	2.00	2.66
4.8	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.	2.00	2.60

## Findings

### Opportunity For Improvement

Investigate and pursue grant opportunities to supplement and enhance existing fiscal resources to support instructional programs.

(Indicator 4.2)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 4.2

#### Evidence and Rationale

Through interviews with several staff members and members of the governing board, a need for additional funding was repeated often. The superintendent in his initial presentation to the Team highlighted the need for additional capital funding for facilities. Survey responses also demonstrated this need. Several stakeholders, including members of the governing board, spoke of the need for additional funding for growth although opinions appeared to be split between the desire to expand student enrollment in the system immediately or to focus first on the stability of the system through more uniform expectations and procedures and then consider expansion.

Adequate funding of organizational and instructional endeavors is paramount to the realization of the goals of any school system. Successful organizations develop plans to secure and make wise use of those needed funds from a variety of available resources rather than rely solely on the allocation of tax dollars.

### Opportunity For Improvement

Refine and implement a system-wide technology plan with a shared vision to enhance the infrastructure, equipment, training and support necessary for an effective digital learning environment.

(Indicator 4.6)

Primary Indicator

## Indicator 4.6

Evidence and Rationale

The school system's Self Assessment acknowledged a need for improvement in the area of instructional technology. Interviews with CCCMCSS personnel further depicted a school system with a basic system but one that does not meet the current and projected needs of all instructional programs. The superintendent acknowledged the need for a more substantial technology infrastructure suitable to support an envisioned "1:1 device initiative." The need to address the technology infrastructure was also highlighted during the staff presentation on Standard 4. A technology plan is in place to prioritize technology needs in the schools but is yet to be fully implemented. During school visits, teachers used the available technology in most classrooms observed, but planned use of technology by students was observed in only a few instances.

In the hands of a properly trained classroom teacher, modern instructional technology can magnify the learning experience for students and enable school systems with high expectations to reach even higher levels of performance. In the hands of a properly supported student, instructional technology can unleash and expand powers of imagination, creativity and research. Equitable technology (equipment, band-width, training, maintenance, etc.) for use by all students and teachers will empower the 21st Century instructional strategies supported by the school system. Furthermore, the use of up-to-date technology by students is critical for college and career readiness.

# Conclusion

The External Review visit to the City of Cape Coral Municipal Charter School System occurred May 1-4, 2016. Through interviews with stakeholders, review of school and system documents, classroom observations in each of the four schools and lengthy professional deliberation, the External Review Team identified several general themes related to student success and organizational effectiveness.

The most notable theme in CCCMCSS is the level of excellence of the instructional programs as recognized by the state ratings for each of the four schools in the system and the high graduation rate of Cape Coral seniors. The Florida Department of Education annually rates all schools on a scale of A-F on indicators of student success measures, including classroom achievement, learning gains, graduation, accelerations and intervention. For 2015, each of the schools is rated as an "A" school which is indicative of superior performance. Likewise, the system's graduation rate (of 98% as last reported by the state) is a remarkable testament to the quality of the education provided for students in the school system. The graduation rate is not solely a tribute to the high school but is another indication of the level of quality and success to be found at all levels of the system, K-12.

Another theme quickly noted by the Team is a clear commitment to learning on the part of both teachers and students. Respectful relationships among teachers and students were noted in the secondary school with cooperative and engaged students. One teacher was quoted as saying "I love it here because I am empowered to teach." A high school teacher was overheard in class telling a student, "I see you thinking!" A middle school student stated, "We have amazing teachers; they make time for us." Another student told a member of the Team "My science teacher is like Sheldon on the Big Bang Theory - but smarter!" Another student commented during an interview, "I love it here because it is challenging, never boring. We are always working." An obvious passion for children and education was noted by Team members in the elementary schools. Results of the Team's classroom observations revealed strengths in the challenging nature of classroom activities, the level of rigor, students' positive attitude towards school and their response to teacher feedback. Parents were also very vocal in their support of the program during interviews.

The schools in CCCMCSS provide excellent instructional spaces for teaching and learning. Children learn best and teachers can teach more effectively in an environment designed to facilitate the 21st Century classroom involving collaborative learning groups and student use of technology. Additionally, both teachers and students are able to perform better in a facility which is free of concern for basic environmental issues or conditions of constant needed repair. Team members noted the excellent condition of the facilities during visits to observe classrooms. A very pleasant and conducive environment was the norm. Maintenance and custodial services needed to provide a safe, clean and healthy learning environment were rated the highest of all findings by the Team in this area. Parents indicated their faith in the schools to provide a safe learning environment, both in survey responses as well as statements during interviews. This sentiment was echoed in survey results from students and staff as well. A parent of a middle school youngster stated that "Kids and teachers conduct tornado preparedness drills each month - they know what to do. Parents; not so much!"

Evidence reviewed by the Team supports that the CCCMCSS Governing Board is a strong guiding force within

the school system and that individual members understand and execute their roles and responsibilities with integrity. Marked as a strength in the system's Self Assessment, interviews with both internal (staff) and external (parents and community) stakeholders confirm the board's dedication and commitment to the success of the system. Conflicting evidence was uncovered, however, relative to the degree of autonomy afforded the superintendent and principals to make day-to-day decisions and the temptation for some board members to become involved in matters of administration. The board has recently completed a thorough review and update of its policies with assistance from NEOLA (North East Ohio Learning Associates).

A decision was made by the governing board to pursue Systems Accreditation through AdvancED in part because the system has grown from one school in 2005 to the four schools in 2016. The decision was made to establish additional structures to ensure that the schools support each other and build on and enhance each other's strengths. Previously, only Oasis High School had been accredited. Systems Accreditation requires a review of all structures within the school system (student achievement, the learning environment and operational efficiencies) to ensure that all are functioning well and collaboratively in support of the goal of educating students. The need for CCCMCSS to operate more as a school system rather than a group of four independent schools was first identified in the system's Self Assessment and later through interviews with teachers and principals. Numerous indicators of a lack of collaboration and internal communication also support the need for more systems focus. As one board member stated, "The leadership (superintendent and four principals) is small enough that we can coalesce around a singular vision." Parents and teachers supported the need for the additional structure of a school system but cautioned that they did not want the process to result in schools that are cookie-cutter copies of each other which would likely hamper the level of excellence currently found in each of the schools.

Lastly, another theme observed throughout CCCMCSS was the hospitality and professionalism with which staff members worked with members of the Team. Openness and transparency were evident in all interactions with staff members in the schools and school system.

CCCMCSS currently offers great programs and instruction for students. Over the past 11 years, the system has created a positive climate for productive growth, hard work and improvement in each of the four schools. The system's current vision and mission statements will likely result in improved teaching and learning for years to come. There are, however, several challenges facing CCCMCSS that should be addressed to realize continuous improvement in the educational programs for students. The first and foremost is to challenge the attitude of some staff members that "We are great just like we are and don't need to improve anything!" The schools are doing an excellent job providing for their students. Test scores and other standard measures of school effectiveness support that feeling. However, the system has grown from one single school in 2005 into four separate and somewhat isolated schools. To evolve to the next level of greatness, the City of Cape Coral Municipal Charter School System needs to address the prevalent attitude held by some that change is not necessary. Some hold onto the individual "silo" or "island" theory that each school can and should operate independently rather than collaborate with others in the system and hold up the current level of success to support their position.

A need for additional funding is apparent for program enhancements and future growth. As additional funds

are procured, care will need to be taken to use those limited resources wisely. Furthermore, it will be critical to ensure that changes in the system brought about by any additional funds do not negatively impact the level of excellence currently being enjoyed in Cape Coral.

The system's infrastructure for instructional technology is in need of expansion and improvement. Student use of technology to explore, investigate, research, communicate and solve problems holds unlimited potential and should not be restricted. The system needs to plan ahead and remain at the leading edge of technical capabilities for its students and teachers.

The decision of whether to expand the program beyond its current enrollment or beyond the current four schools is a matter for serious deliberation. The high quality of programming in all four schools must be preserved and even heightened through any changes. To detract from the success of the system by expanding the program without careful thought and planning would be a serious mistake. The system might be well served by taking time to discuss all alternatives and build consensus among stakeholders for the proper course of action.

The lack of K-12 curriculum alignment is clearly an issue and one which must be addressed by the school system to ensure continued success and organizational effectiveness. By using the expertise of teachers, the system should begin collaborative work to make connections between subjects and ensure that smooth and effective transitions are made annually from kindergarten to graduation. Parents need to be confident that the curriculum being shared with their children is seamless and comprehensive, not isolated islands of excellence at three different levels of the educational organization.

Teachers in CCCMCSS indicated a desire for additional training in the analysis and understanding of student data. While some training has already been provided, they understand the powerful insights into student learning that is possible when a group of teachers review and discuss a child's needs and achievement based on reliable performance data. Additional training over time and development of a system-wide expectation for it to be used on a regular basis will strengthen and support already effective classroom practices.

The City of Cape Coral Municipal Charter School System is by any measure already a highly effective learning organization. As one member of the External Review Team stated during a work session, the four schools in CCCMCSS are already highly effective schools; therefore, efforts to identify those practices which have been effective should be celebrated and measured with the Team's improvement suggestions. Stakeholders overwhelmingly believe in and support the system. The recommendations of the Team are intended to help sustain the excellence of the past and focus on continued improvement by building on the strengths and best practices of each school for the good of all through the development of true system of schools.

The recommendation to address the manner in which the system reviews its vision and mission statements will help stakeholders develop a sense of personal involvement and understanding of the philosophical purpose of the school system and support for its work. The increased use of formative assessments and collaborative analysis of data will result in more focused instructional support for individual students by helping teachers identify and more closely address specific learning needs and deficiencies. The recommendation to address

obvious needs of alignment of the system's curriculum will improve student success at all levels and increase the depth of understanding by providing crucial links and addressing gaps in the K-12 learning experiences. As strong and effective as any one teacher might be, transitioning from one teacher to another cannot be left to chance, but needs to be effective and seamless.

A continuous program of professional learning aligned with the system's needs is a must for any effective school system. All teachers and administrators, regardless of their level of experience or field of expertise, should be expected to continually build their professional capacity and strength. The Team's recommendation to better coordinate support services to meet the unique learning needs of all students recognizes that the students come from different backgrounds and learn in different ways. Individualizing instruction in all classrooms and providing additional support services where needed will help more students succeed at higher levels. The recommendation to pursue grant opportunities to supplement and enhance existing programs is in recognition that limited funds are a reality in any school organization. The high level of expectations evident with all stakeholders makes it crucial for CCCMCSS to develop new sources of ongoing funding to bring goals of the system into reality. Lastly, the importance of a modern, fully-functional technology infrastructure, capable of supporting the digital teaching and learning needs of today and tomorrow cannot be overstated. Teachers who are properly trained and equipped bring a new world of possibilities to students in the classroom. Students in those highly functional digital learning environments are exposed to limitless possibilities.

Combining the school system's current plans and goals with the recommendations of the External Review Team will empower CCCMCSS to become more effective as a learning organization and facilitate greater levels of success by every student every day.

## **Improvement Priorities**

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

- Develop and implement a system-wide collaborative process to horizontally and vertically align the curriculum.
- Implement and monitor the use of system-wide tools and procedures to include formative assessments and collaborative analysis of data to provide targeted instructional support and to enhance instruction.

# 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	258.54	278.34
Teaching and Learning Impact	247.62	268.94
Leadership Capacity	280.00	292.64
Resource Utilization	255.00	283.23

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

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

# Addenda

## Individual Institution Results (Self-reported)

Institution Name	Teaching and Learning Impact	Leadership Capacity	Resource Utilization	Overall IEQ Score
Christa McAuliffe Charter Elementary School	295.24	309.09	242.86	289.74
Oasis Charter Elementary School	261.90	245.45	271.43	258.97
Oasis High School	261.90	272.73	257.14	264.10
Oasis Middle School	252.38	309.09	328.57	282.05

# Team Roster

Member	Brief Biography
Dr. Edlow Barker	<p>Edlow Barker lives in Richmond, Virginia, with his wife Carolyn. Together, they have three children and five grandchildren. His professional work includes extensive experience as assistant superintendent for instruction, director of instruction, principal (elementary, middle, and high), assistant principal, teacher, and coach. His experience is primarily in Virginia, but includes two years as director in a multi-national private school in Cali, Colombia, South America. He earned his Bachelor's Degree from Wake Forest University, the Master's Degree from the University of Virginia, and the Doctoral Degree from Virginia Tech. Additional coursework was taken at Norfolk State University and the University of Alabama. He has taught numerous graduate courses for the University of Virginia and Radford University. Related leadership activities include development of educational foundations in two public school districts, development of a regional academic competition league for high schools, Chairman of the Virginia High School League, and development of a regional Governor's School program for gifted students. He has served on and chaired numerous accreditation committees for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the Virginia Department of Education, and AdvancED.</p>
Ms. Martha Cieplinski	<p>Mrs. Cieplinski has a BSE with majors in Biology and Language Arts, and a Masters in Educational Leadership. Her 47 years of professional experiences include being the Director of a charter military academy, assistant principal for curriculum at a school of 2750 students, classroom teacher and virtual teacher. Her preferred areas of interest are curriculum and classroom instruction. Her achievements include being a National Trainer for the AFT in Instructional Strategies that Work in the Classroom (2007 - 2012), and a certified CRISS trainer (2003-2012).</p> <p>Certifications:</p> <p>    eleot Certification (Active)              Early Learning External Review Certifications</p>
Mr. Jeff Garthwaite	<p>Jeff Garthwaite taught middle school American History and Civics. He served as a middle school assistant principal and principal. He was a school district coordinator for the Department of Juvenile Justice schools and Title I Private Schools. He was assigned as principal to a rural Pre K - 8th grade school and charged to raise the failing school grade. Mr. Garthwaite has presented a variety of educational workshops and informational sessions at national, state, and local conferences. He worked within an educational consulting corporate partnership, providing professional development services to high school principals in six states. He has also provided educational consulting and professional development services to many Florida charter schools. Mr. Garthwaite served as a Regional Director on the Florida League of Middle Schools Executive Board. He has served on several AdvancED External Review Teams for both schools and district systems.</p>

Member	Brief Biography
<p>Ms. Carol Martin</p>	<p>As an educator of 30 years in Alabama Carol Martin has the same enthusiasm for our career as when she began! Ms. Martin's career began in her high school English classroom; later she became the principal of her own high school, served as a high school administrator for 18 years, and now enjoys a district leadership role of Director of Instruction and Intervention in Sylacauga City Schools. She works with PreK-12 in her school system, leading Assessment, RTI, Accountability, Professional Development, and other areas. Ms. Martin's Ed.S. degree is in Educational Leadership. She is a Communications major who enjoys presentations and working with teams. Ms. Martin has organized, led, and served on SACS and AdvancED team processes in several states, Model School teams, and Middle and High Schools That Work teams. She loves to share experiences and enthusiasm with others as they focus on improving schools for all students.</p>
<p>Ms. Amy Rohner</p>	<p>Amy Rohner, as VP for School Operations with Consulting + Professional Assistance, Inc., provides management and oversight services for three alternative charter high schools in Fort Myers, FL. This position brings together nearly 35 years' experience as a certified early childhood special educator, as a CPA with Deloitte and KPMG in charge of non-profit/government audits, as a finance director and internal auditor with the University of Chicago, as owner of her own accounting firm, as an elected Village Trustee and as financial director over 9 charter high schools throughout the state of Florida. Amy is a certified public accountant with a degree in early childhood special education. Amy led her staff at one of the Fort Myers high schools operated by CPA, Inc. in the AdvancEd re-accreditation process. Recently, Amy has served as a team member for three private, charter and District high school AdvancED reviews.</p>

## 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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