Accreditation Progress Report

Gainesville City Schools System
508 Oak Street, N.W.
Gainesville, Georgia, United States 30501-3506

Prepared for the AdvancED Quality Assurance Review

Report Status: Accepted

Report Open Date: January 3, 2012
Report Due Date: December 1, 2013
Report Submitted Date: October 1, 2013
Report Accepted Date: March 14, 2014
Accreditation Progress Report

Contents

1.0 About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI ......................................................... 3
2.0 Introduction to the Accreditation Progress Report ................................................ 4
3.0. Summary ................................................................. 5
4.0. Required Action 1 ................................................................. 6
   4.1. District/System Response ........................................ 6
   4.2. Reviewer Response .................................................. 7
5.0. Required Action 2 ................................................................. 7
   5.1. District/System Response ........................................ 8
   5.2. Reviewer Response .................................................. 8
6.0. Required Action 3 ................................................................. 8
   6.1. District/System Response ........................................ 9
   6.2. Reviewer Response .................................................. 9
1.0 About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

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

**The Accreditation Process.**
To earn and maintain accreditation, district/systems must:

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

2. **Engage in continuous improvement.**
   District/Systems implement continuous improvement focused on improving student performance and school effectiveness.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The required actions of the Quality Assurance Review team have been implemented and have resulted in an overall increase in student performance and stakeholder satisfaction.

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

Funding emerging technologies, including the infrastructure to support them, and adequately preparing new teachers to develop as educators while handling multiple initiatives are the primary challenges.

To address budget for technologies, setting priorities based on outside consultants and technology staff to address infrastructure as we purchase more technology is the strategy to meet that challenge.

For new educators, a robust Teacher and Leader Induction program which provides multiple layers of support and mentoring has been implemented to support multiple initiatives during the first years of teaching. We are also working with university and colleges on training together for new teacher evaluation instruments.

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

The insights and recommendations for the accreditation activities has been incorporated and embedded in our District Strategic Plan. The required actions have been addressed, yet will continue to be areas of focus throughout the accreditation cycle.
Gainesville City Schools System hosted a Quality Assurance Review team on 12/04/2011 - 12/07/2011. Through interviews with district/system stakeholders, classroom observations, and a review of district/system documents and student performance results, the team developed a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) report detailing its findings from the visit. The full report can be viewed at www.advanc-ed.org.

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

### 4.0. Required Action 1

**Source:** QAR  
**Date:** 2012-01-03

**Required Action:**
Implement strategies to effectively manage multiple initiatives and associated data used within the system.

**Evidence:**

The QAR team reviewed numerous documents describing how GCSS is involved in many initiatives designed to better meet the needs of students in the district. Examples of these initiatives include designation as a Charter School System, selection to implement the Race to the Top Grant, a partnership with the Center for Latino Achievement and Success in Education (CLASE) at the University of Georgia, implementation of the STEM Initiative, and many more as noted within the SAR and in district artifacts, as well as reported through interviews with staff members. While the district is commended for making every effort to serve students, GCSS must concurrently implement strategies to most effectively manage these multiple initiatives and base instructional decisions on analysis of data associated with each.

**Rationale:**

Employing multiple initiatives designed to improve student performance and learning creates a great amount of work and extra data to be managed by the district. Strategies to manage this workload and data should be carefully planned and clearly communicated to all district staff.

### 4.1. District/System Response

**Progress Status:** In Progress  
**Response:** The district reality was that numerous initiatives from the federal to state level were in the beginning stages of implementation. This included the required work from the Race to the Top Grant: implementing Common Core standards, using new assessments and data systems to track progress, and a new teacher and leader evaluation system that would contain a student growth measure. The recommendation to "manage multiple initiatives" was addressed by electing to use a new continuous improvement framework that would provide more coherence and unity to the work.
Gainesville City Schools began work in a LEAD Collaborative, four districts across the nation, to implement the UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools Framework called A UNIFIED AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF LEARNING SUPPORTS. The system moves from fragmented and departmentalized practices into working in three teams: INSTRUCTION, MANAGEMENT, and LEARNING SUPPORTS.

The framework also has a mapping process that eliminated redundant or unneeded programs and/or activities and focuses on addressing barriers in the school rather than implementing programs. The framework's process includes community non-profit agencies that serve children and families.

As this system's process is used over time, we have eliminated redundant programs, decreased fragmentation, and unified our initiatives as to how they work together in a unified approach. Since this is a process, it is necessary for the work to continue, and we anticipate being "In Progress" for the duration of the accreditation cycle.

### 4.2. Reviewer Response

**Progress Response:** Completed

**Comments for Institution:** After reviewing the district's response, AdvancED believes the district has adequately addressed this Required Action. The district implemented a framework for tackling the numerous initiatives outlined in the Quality Assurance Review team's report and have unified its work to support student learning. AdvancED agrees that this new framework is a process and requires monitoring of its ongoing activities to ensure that the strategies implemented to address this Required Action are sustained over time. The status of this Required Action is designated "Completed" since the district has implemented the necessary steps to address this Required Action.

### 5.0. Required Action 2

**Source:** QAR

**Date:** 2012-01-03

**Required Action:**

Develop a plan for upgrading emerging technologies and providing additional support services.

**Evidence:**

During interviews with central office and local school personnel, the QAR team learned that wait time for repair of equipment is lengthy. Although emerging technologies are provided to classrooms, use of such equipment fails to be maximized, because the equipment needs repair or maintenance.

**Rationale:**

Ready access to emerging technologies supports the use of effective instructional strategies.
### 5.1. District/System Response

**Progress Status:** In Progress  
**Response:** The Board and district leadership agreed that an analysis of our technology infrastructure and capability was needed. We contracted with an external consultant to do this analysis as well as an analysis of teacher capacity to utilize technology in instruction. Results showed the following critical needs:

- a. Rewiring of cabling at Gainesville High School
- b. Increasing band-width to service a rising number of personal devices
- c. Networked wiring in addition to wireless at two elementary schools

All of those recommendations have been completed.

The recommendation for future planning is to prioritize increasing band-width and adapters for personal wireless devices. These actions are in the District Strategic Plan and are in progress.

### 5.2. Reviewer Response

**Progress Response:** Completed  
**Comments for Institution:** The district has sufficiently addressed this Required Action of the Quality Assurance Review team. As detailed in the district's response, the district contracted with an external consultant to help identify critical needs regarding technology infrastructure and the capacity of technology for teacher use in instruction. The district confirmed the identified needs were completed. Moreover, the district has imbedded technology priorities within its Strategic Plan. The district is encouraged to continue its work in this area. AdvancED has designated this Required Action as "Completed" since the district fulfilled this Required Action.

### 6.0. Required Action 3

**Source:** QAR  
**Date:** 2012-01-03  
**Required Action:** Formulate a framework for vertical articulation to maximize student progress during periods of transition.

**Evidence:**

The district lacks a structured process for transitioning students from Grade 5 to Grade 6 and from Grade 8t to Grade 9. Interviews revealed that while fifth grade students visit the middle school and eighth grade students are
oriented to the high school, articulation among and between all levels of schooling is limited.

Rationale:

Student achievement is maximized when conversations among and between all levels of schooling occur routinely.

6.1. District/System Response

Progress Status: In Progress
Response: Through the use of the Unified and Comprehensive Systems of Learning Support framework, the Board and district identifies the barriers to learning that are presented and includes strategies and actions in the strategic plan to address the barriers. This work is done through the learning supports teams at each school (includes assistant principal, parent coordinator, counselors, graduation coaches, social workers, ELL and Special Education leaders.)

The following actions have been taken to address TRANSITIONS:

(1) A vertical team of Grade 5-6 and 8-9 meets quarterly to share information, strategies, plan events that would introduce new schools, and identify barriers that present when students transition

(2) Two-teacher teams have been created at Grade 6 to reduce the number of teachers and provide more secure relationships

(3) An additional counselor for Grade 9 has been added who works with the 9th Grade Administrator in a teams-based approach

(4) A monthly meeting of the Learning Supports team from schools PK-12 addressed the transition issues of students who are transient and moving in and out of the district

(5) Elementary teachers were moved to middle school, and middle school teachers to high school

Monitoring students in transition who are vulnerable to having barriers to learning is part of the on-going work of the Learning Supports team. Therefore, we anticipate this work to be continuously "IN PROGRESS."

6.2. Reviewer Response

Progress Response: Completed
Comments for Institution: AdvancED commends the district for the steps it has taken to address this Required Action as numerous strategies were implemented to help students during transitional years. As outlined in the district's response, the district has demonstrated its ability to effectively mobilize its efforts to respond to external direction for the benefit of students. AdvancED has designated this Required Action as "Completed" and
encourages the district to continue its work in this area.