External Review

Williamson County Public Schools

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Introduction to the External Review Process

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 specified for their institution, demonstrate high levels of or improvement of student performance if applicable, and provide evidence of stakeholder satisfaction with the operation of the institution. The accreditation standards focus on conditions and processes within a system that impact student performance and organizational effectiveness. The power of AdvancED Performance Accreditation lies in the connections and linkages between and among the standards, student performance, and stakeholder feedback.

Institutions participate in an External Review by a team of highly qualified evaluators who examine the institution's adherence and commitment to the accreditation criteria. The External Review is the hallmark of AdvancED Performance Accreditation as it energizes and equips the leadership and stakeholders of an institution 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 examination of evidence and relevant data, interviews with stakeholders, and observations of instruction, learning, and operations.

The AdvancED External Review Team used the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators and related criteria to guide its evaluation, looking not only for adherence to standards, but also for how the institution functioned as a whole and embodied the practices and characteristics of quality.

Using the evidence at their disposal, the AdvancED External Review Team arrived at a set of findings contained in this report. The report is presented in three sections: Findings, Conclusion, and Addenda.
Part I: Findings

The Findings section presents the External Review Team's evaluation of the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators. It also includes Powerful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement identified by the External Review Team, observations of the Learning Environment, as well as Required Actions.

Accreditation Standards and Indicators

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’s Standards for Quality were developed by a committee comprised of effective 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 ensure excellence and continuous improvement. The standards were reviewed by internationally recognized experts in testing and measurement, teacher quality, and education research.

This section contains an evaluation of each of AdvancED's Accreditation Standards and Indicators, conclusions concerning Powerful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement related to each of the standards, and a description of the evidence examined by the External Review Team. Indicators are evaluated and rated individually by the External Review Team using a four-level performance rubric. The Standard Performance Level is the average of indicator scores for the standard.

Standard 1: Purpose and Direction

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 own evaluation of best practices in 30,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution commits to a shared purpose and direction and establishes expectations for student learning aligned with the institutions' vision that is supported by internal and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and overall institution effectiveness.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examples of communications to stakeholders about the district's purpose (i.e. website, newsletters, annual report, student handbook)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Minutes from meetings related to development of the district's purpose and direction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Copy of strategic plan referencing the district purpose and direction and its effectiveness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Accreditation Report</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Communication plan to stakeholders regarding the district's purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consultant facilitated strategic planning process; Superintendent certified in strategic planning process; Strategic plan and tri-fold posted on website; Updates on student programming; Monthly strategic plan reports; Strategic goals reports; State of the district address; Community input documented on website</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Examples of school purpose statements if different from the district purpose statement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Examples of written stakeholder communications or marketing materials that portray the school purpose and direction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Accreditation Report</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Observations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-negotiable expectations shared by system leadership, principals, and teachers</td>
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<td>3.75</td>
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<td>1.3</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communication plan and artifacts that show two-way communication to staff and stakeholders about educational programs and equitable learning experiences</td>
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<td>• Observations</td>
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<td>• Interviews</td>
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<td>• Examples of schools’ continuous improvement plans</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Accreditation Report</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Statements or documents about ethical and professional practices</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The district strategic plan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Various program offerings for students - drafting, cosmetology; System support/provision of interventionists, academic coaches; First administration of ACT provided by system for all 11th grade students; Policies for ethical behavior - 5.611 and 5.612; Articulation of challenging educational programs; Invest Now opportunities; Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT); Above average evaluation of Superintendent by Board of Education</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.4</th>
<th>Leadership at all levels of the system implement a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interviews</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Accreditation Report</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Examples of schools continuous improvement plans</td>
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<td>• Observations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Agenda, minutes from continuous improvement planning meetings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Communication plan and artifacts that show two-way communication to staff and stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The district strategic plan</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 2011-2017 WCS Strategic Plan, Monthly strategic plan reports, Strategic goals reports, State of the district address, Community input documented on website, School Improvement Plans; Above average evaluation of Superintendent by Board of Education</td>
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<td>4</td>
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</table>
1. Dr. Looney’s leadership exemplifies forward thinking vision and direction for Williamson County Schools (WCS) beyond 21st century skills. The details provided within the WCS Strategic Plan as well as the high level tri-fold brochure has created a common focus that communicates clear goals and strategies to accomplish the vision of the system. Strategic plan reports by month and by goals are provided systematically to communicate progress and next steps. Purposeful strategic planning provide systems with clear direction, targeted focus, and shared accountability to accomplish the goals and objectives of the organization.

2. Expectations of excellence, quality, and high achievement in academics, arts, and athletics are embedded into the culture of Williamson County Schools. Interviews with system leaders, school principals, teachers, parents, and students shared their excitement about the various quality programs and opportunities offered to students in WCS. All junior students are provided the ACT assessment at no cost to the student. Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT) is a new initiative that increases technology access for students in grades 3 through 12 by allowing students to bring their technology devices such as cell phones, iPads, and laptop computers from home. The system leadership stated that although academic growth trends upward, they will not rest on their laurels with status quo actions. The school community continues to experience increased enrollments due to the system’s positive reputation of high standards, expectations, academic achievement, and program offerings. Dr. Looney received an above average evaluation by the Board of Education as evidenced through interviews with the superintendent, some board members, and evaluation comments documented on the WCS website. Organizational leadership that sets the tone for a culture of high expectations and achievement for all students fosters the belief and actions of stakeholders to commit to “rigor, relevance, relationships, and relentlessness,” as stated by Dr. Looney, in pursuit of reaching beyond the vision.

3. The WCS Strategic Plan details a clear 7-year plan inclusive of 31 specific goals focused on student programming, teacher quality, technology, planning and zoning, and finance. The system is transparent and inclusive in their strategic planning efforts. Documentation of stakeholder input was evident through interviews with system and school leadership. Community input was evident through community meeting lists posted on the WCS website. The strategic plan is available to all stakeholders electronically and in brochure form as well. Stakeholders are informed of progress on the strategic plan through board meetings and goal updates by the month and goal. The active engagement of the WCS leadership in strategic planning has provided clarity of purpose and direction, understanding of goals and strategies, and systemic actions by stakeholders to continuously move closer to reaching and surpassing the vision of the system.

**Standard 2: Governance and Leadership**

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 school leadership research, Leithwood & 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 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 school communities to attain school 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 school 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 has found through its own evaluation of best practices in 30,000 institutions around the world 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Standard Performance Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The system operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and system effectiveness.</td>
<td>3.67</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>•Interviews</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>•Student handbooks</td>
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<td></td>
<td>•Staff handbooks</td>
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<td></td>
<td>•Accreditation Report</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>•School handbooks</td>
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<td></td>
<td>•WCS policy manual sections 1.205, 5.113, 2.100; Interviews with Board of Education, Superintendent, Central Office Staff, and School Principals; Policy committee meeting minutes; Teacher evaluation process; Interviews with teachers describe the consistency in the direction of the district; Secondary principals described central office staff adherence to policy and procedures; Copy of redistricting plan</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
| 2.2 | The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively. | • Communication plan to inform all staff on code of ethics, responsibilities, conflict of interest  
• Proof of legal counsel  
• Accreditation Report  
• Historical compliance data  
• Interviews  
• Governing authority policies on roles and responsibilities, conflict of interest  
• Governing code of ethics  
• Board handbook in development; Code of Ethics; Conflict of Interest; Staff attorneys provide guidance to Board of Education; Pre-training process for newly elected board members prior to service | 4 |
| 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. | • Communications regarding governing authority actions  
• District strategic plan  
• Examples of school improvement plans  
• Roles and responsibilities of school leadership  
• Roles and responsibilities of district leadership  
• Interviews  
• Accreditation Report  
• Stakeholder input and feedback  
• Agendas and minutes of meetings  
• System leadership consistency in asking what principals and teachers need to fulfill their roles and responsibilities; Policies 1.001, 1.205; Interviews with Board of Education; Principal interviews cite quality leadership from central office staff | 4 |
| 2.4 | Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction. | • Examples of decisions aligned with the district's strategic plan  
• Examples of collaboration and shared leadership  
• Interviews  
• Examples of decisions in support of the schools' continuous improvement plans  
• Examples of improvement efforts and innovations in the educational programs  
• Examples of decisions aligned with the district's purpose and direction  
• Accreditation Report  
• Consistency of purpose stated among stakeholders; Consistent following of the Strategic Plan as the blueprint for system actions and decisions; Principal interviews state shared training; Middle and high schools planned activities on shared campuses; Staff interviews stated that programs and support focus on student growth and achievement | 4 |
| 2.5 | Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction. | • Accreditation Report  
• Examples of stakeholder input or feedback resulting in district action  
• Interviews  
• Survey responses  
• Involvement of stakeholders in a school improvement plan  
• Involvement of stakeholders in district strategic plan  
• Involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning and school improvement planning; Stakeholder input in strategic planning documented on WCS website; Parent interviews revealed numerous opportunities to be engaged in children's education through PTO, booster clubs, Special Education IEP support, and community and evening programs | 3 |
Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice in all areas of the system and improved student success.

- Interviews
- Accreditation Report
- Job specific criteria
- Adaptation to state's teacher evaluation; Teacher evaluation process includes informal walkthroughs and formal observations; Above average evaluation of Superintendent by Board of Education; Teachers receive monetary incentives for perfect attendance; Consistency in curriculum scope and sequence; School Net; Departmental specific trainings for bus drivers, finance, special education paraprofessionals

### Powerful Practices

1. The Williamson County School's policies and procedures provide clear operational directions for the effective administration and oversight for the system and its schools.

   The contents of the policies and procedures are arranged in user friendly and clearly worded sections that outline the parameters the district is to follow in its operational processes and the leadership’s responsibly of its administration. The policies are arranged in five general sections including School Board Operations, Fiscal Management, Support Services, Instructional Program, Personnel, and Students. Each section sets forth in precise language the philosophy of the operations of the district. Interviews with school administrators described consistent actions of adherence to system policies by central office staff. Interviews with teachers described the consistency in the direction of the district. Clear policies and procedures provide systemic guidance, appropriate actions, and evaluative measures for the supervision of the operation of the schools, management of personnel, and compliance with local, state and national laws and regulations.

2. The WCS Board of Education clearly operates within the framework and contents of the district policies and procedures that model sound fiscal responsibility to provide for the success of all students.

   The twelve Williamson County School’s board members operate as a single unit as they carry out their roles and responsibilities. The framework and content of the policies serve as the source of directions and operations for within how the board is to govern. There is a Board Policy committee that updates or revises the policies as determined necessary as it meets on a monthly basis. Several board members explained how pre-board training is provided for newly elected board members so that they will have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities before their service begins. A board member stated, “Our role as a board is to set policies in place and it is the district leadership’s role to implement the policies.” Boards of Education that operate as an ethical and cohesive unit accept the responsibilities that accompany their roles so as to provide the public with trust and confidence in making the best decisions that positively impact the children and community in which they serve.
3. The WCS Board of Education protects, supports, and respects the autonomy of the system and school leadership to accomplish the goals set forth by the system. Interviews with district leadership, principals, teachers, and the Board of Education were consistent in their articulation regarding the function of the BOE. The board does not micro-manage the operation of the district but instead allows the Superintendent and the leadership staff to manage the operation of the system. The Superintendent is given the autonomy and authority to serve as the chief administrative officer to implement the board’s policies and manage the system and its schools. This practice sets forth a tone of quality leadership and support for the district’s daily and long-term operations.

4. Stakeholders are committed to excellence and high expectations. The leadership and staff at all levels operate within a culture that supports and exemplifies the high standards of the Board of Education and Superintendent. The Williamson County School’s employees are focused on obtaining high achievement of all students and demonstrate pride in the school system. Upon the arrival of the superintendent, the board engaged the district in the development of a strategic plan. The plan, developed in 2010, provides the goals and strategies for a seven-year period. The plan includes high achievement goals outlining specific areas of improvement supported by the additional areas of technology, planning and zoning, and finance. High standards set forth in increasing pass rates on AP exams, increasing ACT attainment score of 24, and establishing rigorous training for teachers are some examples of how the district takes actions to meet its vision. The district consistently out-performs all other school districts in the state. The alignment of the vision to the strategic plan has set the course for a culture of high expectations and achievement for all students in Williamson County Schools.

**Standard 3: Teaching and Assessing for Learning**

A high-quality and effective 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 to 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, which include strong communication skills, knowledge of content, and knowledge of how to teach the content. The school'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 et al, 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 et al, 2008). According to Marks, Louis, & Printy (2002), school staff that engage in "active organizational learning also have higher achieving students in contrast to those that do not." Likewise, a study conducted by Horng, Klasik, & Loeb (2010), concluded that leadership in effective schools, "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 through its own evaluation of best practices in 30,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning that 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Standard Performance Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The system's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning across all grades and courses.</td>
<td>3.17</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Learning expectations for different courses and programs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Interviews</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Course, program, or school schedules</td>
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<td>• Student work across courses or programs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Course or program descriptions</td>
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<td>• Lesson plans</td>
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<td>• Observations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Teacher evaluation criteria relating to prescribed instructional designs and proprietary practices</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Posted learning objectives</td>
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<td>• Enrollment patterns for various courses and programs</td>
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<td>• Accreditation Report</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Systemic scope and sequence; ACT composite score at 23.1 (2012); ACT composite score goal at 24 (2013); “I Can” statements for all students; Honors portfolio materials on WCS website</td>
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| 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. | • Curriculum guides  
• A description of the systematic review process for curriculum, instruction, and assessment  
• Accreditation Report  
• Common assessments  
• Program descriptions  
• Products – scope and sequence, curriculum maps  
• System-wide use of School Net; Quarterly benchmark assessments; Multiple assessments of student learning identified in stakeholder interviews, Accreditation Report, and 2012-13 Assessment Schedule on WCS website; Upward trends in academic achievement evidence on 2012 TN State Report Card; Gr. 3-8 ranked first in state on Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) | 4 |
| 3.3 | Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations. | • Examples of teacher use of technology as an instructional resource  
• Examples of student use of technology as a learning tool  
• Student work demonstrating the application of knowledge  
• Teacher evaluation criteria relating to prescribed instructional designs and proprietary practices  
• Interviews  
• Accreditation Report  
• Observations  
• Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (ELEOT); Instructional support needed for Limited English students; Instructional support needed for teacher delivery and facilitation of instruction for limited english proficient students (LEP) | 3 |
| 3.4 | System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success. | • Curriculum maps  
• Accreditation Report  
• Supervision and evaluation procedures  
• Documentation of collection of lesson plans, grade books, or other data record systems  
• Peer or mentoring opportunities and interactions  
• Administrative classroom observation protocols and logs  
• Interviews  
• Professional development offerings and plans tied to the prescribed education program, instructional strategies, developmentally appropriate practices, and student success  
• Principals coach teachers to improve instructional practices; Teacher evaluations consist of cumulative observations that include informal walkthroughs and formal observations | 4 |

| 3.5 | The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels. | • Common language, protocols and reporting tools  
• Interviews  
• Examples of improvements to content and instructional practice resulting from collaboration  
• Accreditation Report | 3 |

| 3.6 | Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning. | • Observations  
• Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance  
• Examples of assessments that prompted modification in instruction  
• Accreditation Report  
• System-wide non-negotiables; System-wide scope and sequence; ELEOT observations revealed limited use of exemplars to demonstrate learning expectations for students; Accreditation Report reflected the need to improve and strengthen exemplars for student reference | 3 |
| 3.7 | Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning. | • Accreditation Report  
• Records of meetings and informal feedback sessions  
• Interviews | 3 |
| 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. | • Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance  
• Survey results  
• Volunteer program with variety of options for participation  
• List of varied activities and communications modes with families, e.g., info portal, online, newsletters, parent centers, academic nights, open house, early release days  
• Accreditation Report  
• Calendar outlining when and how families are provided information on child's progress  
• Interviews  
• Parent survey results; Information provided to stakeholders in multiple formats such as In Focus eNewsletter, School Net, WCS website, Parent Portal; Grade Speed; Three-tiered volunteer structure | 4 |
| 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. | • Accreditation Report  
• Interviews  
• A formalized student advocacy process is not systemic across the district; WCS Accreditation Report identified student advocacy as an area for improvement | 2 |
| 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. | • Sample communications to stakeholders about grading and reporting  
• Accreditation Report  
• Policies, processes, and procedures on grading and reporting | 3 |
### Powerful Practices

**Indicator 3.2**

1. The district monitors and adjusts curriculum, instruction, and assessment using a plethora of data sources. Interviews with district staff, school administrators, teachers, students, and parents revealed a variety of assessments measuring student learning throughout the school year. Examples included benchmark assessments, PLAN, PSAT, WCS Writing Assessment, end-of-course exams, ACT, and many others identified in the 2012-2013 Assessment Schedule. Quality student measures that are valid, reliable, and fair, minimize the possibilities of misinterpretation of the results. Quality results will allow teachers to determine the best instructional strategies for implementation that positively impact student learning.
2. Instructional practices are consistently monitored and supported by school and district administrators to ensure student success.
   Interviews from curriculum specialists reveal that the Teaching and Learning Department consistently monitors and supports the district’s Scope and Sequence to ensure full alignment and implementation of teacher use in the classroom. Interviews with teachers, school administrators, district leadership revealed that the system provides teacher mentoring and induction programs that supports and assists new teachers in the classroom. A review of agenda minutes support that new teachers receive coaching and mentoring opportunities. District level specialists visit classrooms and provide additional support to any teacher needing individualized guidance. Further, teacher interviews expressed that they are provided many professional learning opportunities during the summer months where some teachers receive stipends or professional development credit. Additionally, teachers are provided with professional development in their individual schools as well as opportunities provided by the district through the AVATAR Learning Platform. Academic achievement continues to trend upward in Williamson County Schools as evidenced through consistent data provided by the system and Tennessee Department of Education. There has also been a significant increase in students enrolled in AP classes. Survey results from staff members revealed that the administration supports the improvement of instructional practices. When teachers are held accountable for providing students with effective instructional practices and supported by positive school and district administrators, student achievement can heighten and instructional best practices can yield positive results.

3. The district and school communities engage families in various creative ways to inform them of their children’s learning progress.
   Various interviews with parents, students, teachers, principals, and district leaders consistently articulated the multitude of opportunities provided for parents and families to be engaged in their child's education. The In Focus email newsletter provides information to parents on a regular basis. Many other information and communication formats such as School Net, the WCS website, the Parent Portal, Let's Talk, and Grade Speed inform families about their child's progress, school and system learning expectations, events, and much more. Families have many opportunities to become involved via school PTOs, booster clubs, and volunteer trainings. These opportunities provide for two-way channels of communications that nurture and strengthen relationships between school, home, and community.

**Opportunities for Improvement**

1. Develop exemplars to demonstrate higher levels of learning expectations for students.
   Evidenced through the WCS Accreditation Report, teacher interviews, and the scope and sequence, the need to further develop exemplars was identified by district stakeholders. When students are able to compare high quality exemplars to their own work, they will gain a better understanding of the current reality of their work to improve their ability to set goals to accomplish the learning expectations.

**Standard 4: Resources and Support Systems**

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, 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 30,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, to meet special needs, and to comply with applicable regulations. The institution employs and allocates staffs 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 to improve their effectiveness. The institution ensures compliance with applicable governmental regulations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Standard Performance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The system has resources and provides services in all schools that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4.1 | - Accreditation Report
  - Interviews
  - Assessments of staffing needs
  - Documentation of highly qualified staff
  - Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement and retention of professional and support staff for the district and schools
  - Three Intervention Specialist hired in support of closing the achievement gap; Interviews revealed that only one Intervention Specialist remained | 3 |

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Williamson County Public Schools
| 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. | •Observations  
•Examples of school schedules  
•Accreditation Report  
•Survey results  
•Examples of school calendars  
•Interviews  
•District strategic plan showing resources support for district  
•Perfect attendance incentives for teachers; Three Intervention Specialist hired in support of closing the achievement gap; Interviews revealed that only one Intervention Specialist remained; Grant writer secures additional funding from outside sources | 4 |
| 4.3 | The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff. | •Interviews  
•Observations  
•Accreditation Report  
•Policies, handbooks on district and school facilities and learning environments  
•Custodial and maintenance contracts | 3 |
| 4.4 | The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system. | •District strategic plan showing the areas of budget, facilities, quality control, and other strategic systems  
•Interviews  
•Policies, handbooks on district and school facilities and learning environments  
•Accreditation Report  
•Grant writer secures additional funding from outside sources; Positive relationship with County Commission; 5-year capital improvement plan | 4 |
| 4.5 | The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system. | •Accreditation Report  
•Data on media and information resources available to students and staff  
•Pilots of Spanish and Chinese language; Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT) implementation | 3 |
| 4.6 | The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system’s teaching, learning, and operational needs. | • Brief description of technology or web-based platforms that support the education delivery model  
• Policies relative to technology use at the district-level and school-level  
• Accreditation Report  
• Interviews  
• Brief description of learning management systems or data management systems that support the effective use of student assessment results, school effectiveness, and district effectiveness | 3 |
| 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. | • Interviews  
• Student assessment system for identifying student needs  
• Accreditation Report  
• Examples of improvements made to education program and delivery models based on results of program effectiveness evaluations  
• Social classes and services, e.g., bullying, character education  
• List of support services available to students  
• Full-time nurse at every school | 3 |
| 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. | • List of services available related to counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning  
• Accreditation Report  
• Description of IEP process  
• Interviews  
• All junior students take ACT exam at no cost to student; Regional school social workers | 3 |

**Powerful Practices**

**Indicator**
1. The system provides and effectively utilizes multiple resources and various learning programs and opportunities to support their purpose and direction to promote academic success for all students. Despite the low expense per child the system effectively uses many of their resources in order to support the direction of Williamson County Schools. Through the outstanding support of the PTA, schools in the system are able to subsidize many of the costs of goods and services required to successfully implement initiatives such as Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT) and bolster their athletic and arts programs. Also through innovative incentive programs such as the perfect attendance initiative for teaching personnel the system gains savings from reducing the costs of substitute teachers and rolling those savings into other purpose driven activities. The system also focused on non-traditional revenue sources through its work to partner with the business community as well as their intent to establish a foundation and secure donations online. All help to demonstrate that the system is committed to researching and utilizing many resources in order to fulfill the strategy set by leadership. Initiatives focused on the acquisition of additional resources that align with the vision of the system and support student learning and achievement will minimize distractions caused by reduced funding.

2. The 84-month strategic plan clearly demonstrates strategic resource management in support of the purpose and direction of system. The system is currently in its third year of a 7-year strategic plan which includes the management of personnel growth, fiscal management, and physical growth in terms of new schools. This plan is regularly monitored, tracked and assessed by the board. There was no evidence that any resources at the school or the district level was obtained outside of the scope of a strategic initiative. The plan is flexible and if any opportunity arises to revise the plan (such as in the identification of the gap in assessment scores in sub-populations demographic) the system capitalizes on it.

**Opportunities for Improvement**
1. Develop and implement process and procedures to monitor the effectiveness of the Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT) program. The system has been highly innovative in their strategic initiatives to bring technology to the classroom. Through the execution of BYOT, the system desires to leverage students’ existing devices in order to “maximize learning” by integrating “their own” technology into classroom activities. The system has very high expectations for the implementation and adaptation of this program; however through the team’s observations and interviews it was evident that there are still challenges. Interviews with teachers revealed that while professional development training is available there is still a lack of understanding on how to best incorporate these varying student devices in their curriculum. In the higher grades (5th grade and beyond) many teachers commented that they spent more time than expected policing how the students were using technology in class (i.e. social media, texting versus research for course work). Students readily admitted in interviews that despite signing a usage agreement they were able to easily circumvent the network filters put in place to access web content outside of the permitted scope set by IT policy. Students also offered that enforcement of the accountability rules for internet usage varied per classroom where some teachers were strict enforcers while others ignored if students did not adhere to IT policy. Parents cited in interviews their concerns about internet safety enforcement while on school grounds along with tangible differences they see in BYOT’s application in the classroom. Two parents noted that their middle school student had extremely creative projects and course work which leveraged technology, while their high school students showed no evidence of work requiring it. What the team observed, in many of the classrooms, substantiated these claims: few teachers used or integrated technology in their instruction or directed students towards it for research or collaboration. Also few students in the classroom were seen using their own digital devices during the time periods observed.

To improve the proper use and adaptation of BYOT it is important that the system develop and implement a process to monitor and track the use of the various technologies as well as research and regularly assess the adaptation of the BYOT initiative by students and teachers. A process for regular assessment will help the system to plan the improvement of usage amongst teachers, to provide consistent enforcement (through technology and policy) of appropriate usage across schools and improve the overall safety in using the platform. This will help to align with the system-wide goals and priorities, as dictated by Williamson County Schools’ strategy to “fully integrate relevant technology” into the classroom.

**Standard 5: Using Results for Continuous Improvement**

Systems with strong improvement processes are moving beyond anxiety about the current reality and focusing on priorities and initiatives for the future. Using results, that is, data and other information, to guide continuous improvement is key to an institution’s success. A study conducted by Datnow, Park, & 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 et al., 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 school 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).

AdvancED has found through its own evaluation of best practices in 30,000 institutions around the world
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Standard Performance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5.1       | • Documentation or description of evaluation tools/protocols  
• Interviews  
• Brief description of student assessment system including range of data produced from standardized and local or school assessments on student learning and school performance  
• Brief description of learning management systems or data management systems that support the effective use of student assessment results, school effectiveness, and district effectiveness  
• Accreditation Report  
• WCS assessment system; Assessment schedule posted on WCS website | 4 |
| 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. | •Examples of data used to measure the effectiveness of the district systems that support schools and learning  
   •Accreditation Report  
   •List of data sources related to district effectiveness  
   •Examples of changes to the district strategic plan based on data results  
   •List of data sources related to student learning, instruction, program effectiveness, and conditions that support learning  
   •WCS assessment system; Assessment schedule posted on WCS website | 3 |
| 5.3 | Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data. | •Accreditation Report  
   •Documentation of attendance and training related to data use  
   •Training materials specific to the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data  
   •Interviews  
   •Data team trainings; Varied levels of data use within schools as evidenced through interviews; Accreditation report revealed formative assessment data use by teachers as an area needing improvement | 3 |
| 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. | •Accreditation Report  
   •Examples of use of results to evaluate continuous improvement action plans  
   •Evidence of student readiness for the next level  
   •Evidence of student growth  
   •Evidence of student success at the next level | 3 |
### 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.

- Accreditation Report
- Communication plan regarding student learning, systems that support learning, and achievement of school improvement goals to stakeholders
- Sample communications to stakeholders regarding student learning, conditions that support learning, and achievement of school improvement goals
- Examples of district marketing tools and websites that cite student achievement results or that make promises regarding student achievement
- Interviews
- Use of social media; Formative assessment results are compared from school to school

### Powerful Practices

**1.** Williamson County Schools effectively monitors and communicates information about student learning, school performance, and the achievement of the system goals to stakeholders.

Williamson County Schools district leadership effectively monitors their instructional programs. Specific non-negotiable expectations have been established by the superintendent and his staff and are implemented by teachers in the schools. Monthly updates as to the progress of the system’s strategic plan and formative assessments are discussed in public televised board meetings. Board minutes are copied to all principals and available on the WCS website. Dr. Looney has an open door policy and invites all to engage him in conversation which can lead to improved educational opportunities for all students. Interviews with parents, teachers, and principals revealed that Dr. Looney is always willing to listen and will provide for needs as the budget allows.

**2.** Williamson County School System has established and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.

All students K-8 have three standardized formative assessments throughout the year to monitor and adjust classroom instruction. Various assessments such as AIMS, School Net, and others provide data to track at-risk students. These formative assessments allow for assistance to the struggling child before failure occurs. School Net allows for teacher created and standardized assessments. Summative assessments, such as TCAP, can be entered into School Net as well. This system data allows for schools, grades, and subgroups to be compared and analyzed. A comprehensive assessment system works in concert with the district's instructional programs to promote results-focused decision making for improved plans of action.

### Opportunities for Improvement

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**Indicator**

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1. Extend training on the use and interpretation of formative assessments for all teachers. The use of formative assessment data varies from school to school as shared through teacher interviews. The Accreditation Report also supports this fact in that "some teachers still struggle to use formative assessment effectively." The district leadership was open and candid in their identification of their needs in this area. Although training has occurred in the use of data to inform instruction, the students will benefit as teachers become avid users of formative assessment data so as to provide ongoing feedback that impact student learning on a daily basis.
Learning Environment

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. External review team members conduct multiple observations during the review process and provide ratings on 30 items based on a 4 point scale with 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 7 learning environments included in ELEOT.

Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environments</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Equitable Learning Environment</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. High Expectations Environment</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Supportive Learning Environment</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Active Learning Environment</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Well-Managed Learning Environment</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Digital Learning Environment</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part II: Conclusion
Summary of the External Review

In off-site and on-site review sessions, the AdvancED External Review Team examined artifacts and evidence provided by the institution. During the on-site portion of the review, the team reviewed additional artifacts, collected and analyzed data from interviews, and conducted observations.

Williamson County Schools (WCS) hosted a School System Accreditation External Review on March 3 - 6, 2013. The 3 ½ days of on-site review in WCS consisted of eight team members who provided their knowledge, skills, and expertise for the External Review. The External Review Team members were as follows:

Dr. Veronica Harts, VP of Professional Learning, AdvancED (Alpharetta, Georgia) - Lead Evaluator
Mr. Ronnie Parks, AdvancED Field Consultant (Milan, Tennessee) - Associate Lead Evaluator
Mrs. Wanda Berry, Federal Programs Director, Hickman County Schools (Centerville, Tennessee)
Mrs. Yolanda Davis, AdvancED Senior Engineer (Alpharetta, Georgia)
Dr. Sean Deas, Assistant Principal, Henry County Schools (McDonough, Georgia)
Mrs. Margaret Gilmore, Instructional Curriculum Supervision, Shelby County Schools (Memphis, Tennessee)
Dr. Fran Owen, Instructional Supervisor, Sevier County Schools (Sevierville, Tennessee)
Mr. Leonard Paul, Director, AdvancED Northwest Accreditation Commission (Las Vegas, Nevada).

The work of the team during the External Review consisted of virtual team orientations in preparation for the External Review. Team assignments prior to arriving on-site entailed an initial analysis of various documents provided by WCS such as the Accreditation Report which contained the system's internal review documentation. The External Review Team examined documents and conducted an initial preview of district artifacts through the WCS website. The Lead Evaluator and Associate Lead Evaluator conducted several virtual meetings with the Superintendent and/or some of the district leaders in preparation for the External Review.

The External Review began on Sunday evening, March 3, with an informal welcome to Williamson County Schools by Superintendent Looney, Mr. Tim Gaddis, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment and Ms Laurette Carle, Professional Development Coordinator. The External Review Team spent the first full day of the review at the district office. An overview of WCS was given by Dr. Looney along with Standard presentations by the district leadership. The team spent time listening to and asking questions of the WCS leadership staff members, Board of Education members, and many school principals. Only four members of the Board of Education were able to participate in the interview sessions on Monday, March 4. The External Review Team requested the help of the district to attempt to schedule additional interview sessions with more board members on Wednesday, March 6. Ms Carle took immediate action and was able to secure additional interviews with four more board members. The team also engaged in an in-depth review of artifacts on the WCS Intranet with guidance and support by the district staff. Following Monday's review at the district level office, the External Review Team conducted the team work session in the evening.
The second day of the review was focused on school site-reviews. The purpose of the school-site reviews is to determine the level of district guidance and support to ensure the maximum impact on student learning, performance, and organization effectiveness. Eight schools were selected to receive the on-site reviews by the External Review Team on Tuesday, March 5. Team members were divided into four pairs whereby each pair visited two schools, one in the morning and the second school in the afternoon. There was an unfortunate occurrence at one of the schools that was scheduled to be reviewed by a pair of team members. A fire occurred at Fairview High School in the early morning hours of March 5. Although the school had to be closed for the day, the school administration and teachers at Fairview High School asked that the External Review Team continue with their plans to visit the school. The district leadership was quick to have a second plan of action in place in preparation for uninterrupted review time at the school whereby the school site-review at Fairview High School was able to take place minus observations of students in the classrooms. The school site-reviews were followed by an External Review Team evening work session.

The final day of the review, Wednesday, March 6, encompassed final interviews, clarifications and inquiries, and team discussions and deliberations. The External Review Team reached consensus on the performance levels of each of the thirty-five Standard Indicators, Powerful Practices, Opportunities for Improvement, and Required Actions. The review concluded with an Exit Report presentation of the findings to the Board of Education, Superintendent, district leaders and various stakeholders.

Williamson County Schools, Superintendent Dr. Mike Looney, the Board of Education, and the district leadership were well-prepared for the System Accreditation External Review. Their intense preparation for the External Review began in the first half of 2012 as Mr. Tim Gaddis, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment and Ms Laurette Carle, Professional Development Coordinator led the district's internal review process. A Gantt chart was used to build the timeline of activities scheduled across the district. The internal review was divided into three phases, Preparation, Internal Work, and External Review. Preparation Phase activities included informational meetings for leadership and staff, overview trainings for WCS Board of Education and school administrators, initial development of the system level standard committees, and update of demographics in AdvancED's Adaptive System of School Improvement Support Tools (ASSIST). The Internal Work Phase was comprised of activities such as stakeholder communications on the accreditation process, administration and analysis of the AdvancED surveys, initial development of the school level standard committees, internal review of the AdvancED Standards at the school level, and the district review of school Self Assessments. The External Review phase consisted of communications and logistical planning with the Lead Evaluator, submission of key documents into the ASSIST platform, on-site review by the External Review Team, Board of Education meeting to receive the Exit Report presented by the team, and implementation planning.

Williamson County Schools and the district leadership were authentic and candid in their Self Assessment of the Standards. The district was clear in their explanation concerning areas in which growth and progress was made as well as areas of improvement that were necessary. The WCS internal review of the Standards reflected several indicators at performance levels 3 and 4. (Performance level 4 is the highest Standard Indicator rating, followed by 3, 2, and finally, 1 being the lowest.) The district's overall internal self assessment rating for Standard 1, Purpose and Direction was at performance level 3.25. For
Standard 2, Governance and Leadership, the district's overall internal self assessment performance level rating was 4.0. The district highlighted the WCS Strategic Plan's process and implementation as the guiding "blue print" for the organization. The Board of Education was also noted as a "Hallmark" in WCS. The Self Assessment reflected the BOE as a stable and cohesive unit of leaders with clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Standard 3, Teaching and Assessing for Learning averaged at performance level rating 3.0. The district self rated indicators 3.6 and 3.9 at performance level 2. They described both indicators as areas needing improvement as they move forward to effectively implement "the system's instructional process to support student learning (indicator 3.6) as well as develop a structure whereby "each student is well known by at least one advocate who supports the student's educational experiences" (indicator 3.9). Standard 4, Resources and Support Systems was rated by WCS at performance level 3.25. Finally, Using Results for Continuous Improvement, Standard 5, received an overall rating of 3.6 by the district.

Williamson County Schools was frank in their review and identification of the areas in greatest need of improvement. Children identified according to the state's Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) within four subpopulations, students with disabilities, ethnic/race, limited English proficiency (LEP) and economically disadvantaged, demonstrated improved achievements in most of the tested areas. English I and II were the exceptions. Although the subpopulation of students performed higher than the state average, the gap closure remains a challenge and is on the radar of the district. Other areas in which the district identified as needing improvements were the effective use of formative data by all teachers, provision of "sufficient feedback" to students, and the continuation in the development of exemplars for students to know and understand the learning expectations.

A series of conference calls and steady email communications with the district leadership included discussions about the progress on the internal review process at the district and school level, school site-reviews, and logistical planning for the External Review. Mr. Tim Gaddis, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, and Ms Laurette Carle, Professional Development Coordinator, consistently updated the External Review Team Lead Evaluator with pertinent system information before the arrival of the team. Prior to the arrival of the External Review Team, the district leaders were purposeful in their responsibility to provide evidence to demonstrate how WCS met the Standards Indicators. All of the components for the Accreditation Report by the district and its schools (Executive Summary, Self Assessment, Stakeholder Feedback and Student Performance Diagnostics, the District Strategic Plan, School Improvement Plans, and Assurances) were completed and submitted prior to the final submission date as required by the AdvancED ASSIST platform. Within the Carolyn Campbell Room, the conference room reserved for the External Review Team, eight laptop computers with Internet access to the system's Intranet was available. Artifacts were organized by Standards and easy to access by each team member. The district leaders were quick to respond to provide the team with additional artifacts when requested during the External Review.

A total of 261 stakeholders participated in interviews by the External Review Team. Participation included Superintendent, Dr. Mike Looney, eight Board of Education members, twenty-one supervisory staff members, thirty-one principals, thirty parents, seventy-seven teachers, and ninety-three students.
Using the evidence collected, the team engaged in dialogue and deliberations concerning the degree to which the institution met the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators.

The External Review assessed the Standards and Indicators using the AdvancED performance level ratings. The Standard Indicators averages ranged from performance level 4 (being the highest) to performance level 1 (being the lowest). The overall Standard ratings were as follows:

- Standard 1, Purpose and Direction - 3.75
- Standard 2, Governance and Leadership - 3.67
- Standard 3, Teaching and Assessing for Learning - 3.17
- Standard 4, Resources and Support Systems - 3.25
- Standard 5, Using Results for Continuous Improvement - 3.4.

There were a total of fourteen Powerful Practices. The purpose and direction of Williamson County Schools has been clearly established through the leadership of the Superintendent and Board of Education and supported by the stakeholders in the community. Superintendent, Dr. Mike Looney, provides robust leadership that is forward thinking, impactful, and relentless in pursuit of the district's vision of becoming "a district recognized nationally for students who excel in academics, the arts, and athletics." The road map that provides the direction for school system is the 7-year WCS Strategic Plan. The plan details 31 specific goals, measurable objectives, strategies and actions, and monitoring components that sets the course for continuous high expectations and increased learning performance for all students. Evidence supported the involvement of the stakeholders in the process. The WCS leadership generates strategic plan reports by month and goals to communicate progress and next steps. Initiatives such as Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT), provision of the ACT assessment for all junior students, and focused purpose to increase the number of students enrolled in AP classes, demonstrates the commitment of WCS in support of high expectations, meaningful student engagement and higher academic achievement. Astonishing academic performance is clearly demonstrated by continuous achievement in all growth areas, writing, and ACT composite scores. Although the subpopulation students experienced growth, the system remains aware and action-focused to address the gap closure.

The governance and leadership of Williamson County Schools provides a high level of understanding of the roles and responsibilities by the elected Board of Education. The BOE works as a cohesive unit developing policies and practices that support high expectations, increased learning and performance, fiscal accountability and efficient resource management. The policies and procedures clearly outline the parameters the WCS follow in its operational processes. Board members expressed the importance of their function as policy makers and the district leaders as the implementers of the set policies.

Stakeholders cited the high quality and supportive leadership of the superintendent and district level staff as well as the commitment demonstrated by school administrators, teachers, and personnel as a culture whereby everyone is held accountable to impact positive student growth. The Board of Education evaluated the superintendent with an above average rating.

Three Opportunities for Improvements focused on Indicators 3.6, 4.6, and 5.3. The External Review Team noted the importance of further development of exemplars that demonstrate student learning expectations, effective monitoring of BYOT, and extended training on the use and interpretation of
formative assessments. Although the External Review Team rated these three indicators at performance level 3, the team desired to also present them as improvement opportunities in which the system had identified, as levers to prompt faster movement towards improved results.

During the on-site review, members of the External Review Team evaluated the learning environment by observing classrooms and general operations of the institution. Using data from these observations, the team evaluated the quality of instruction and learning that took place classified around seven constructs or environments: equity, high expectations, support, engagement, progress monitoring and feedback, management, and use of technology.

On Day 2 of the External Review, the team observed in thirty-three classrooms. The Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (ELEOT) was used for each observation. The ELEOT results were used by the team to corroborate the WCS Accreditation Report, Strategic Plan, student performance and other information and data provided by the system. The summary of the Learning Environment should provide WCS with additional insights regarding the overall teaching and learning across schools in the district.

The External Review Team observed classrooms with visible "I Can" statements and respectful and friendly students, teachers, administrators, and staff members that demonstrate genuine care and concern for the children they teach. The Supportive Learning Environment (rated at 3.3) and the Well-Managed Learning Environment (rated at 3.2) were the two environments with the highest ELEOT ratings (4 is the highest score and 1 is the lowest score). The two items that garnered the highest averages within the Supportive Learning Environment were items C1 - "Demonstrates or expresses that learning experiences are positive," and C3 - "Takes risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback.)"

Students are provided with a variety of program offerings in WCS. The implementation of BYOT provides students with opportunities to use their interactive devises to enhance their learning experiences. Item F1 - "Speaks and interacts respectfully with teachers(s) and peers," averaged a rating of 3.5 within the Well-Managed learning Environment. The team observed throughout Day 2 positive interactions between students and their teachers and administrators.

Within the Equitable Learning Environment, Item A4 - "Has ongoing opportunities to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/difference," averaged rating was 1.8. Although WCS has a smaller percentage of ethnic diversity as documented in the district demographics, differences in backgrounds, culture, and heritage exist in all communities large and small. Parents, students, and teachers at one school in which some team members visited expressed their appreciation for having opportunities to learn about other students and people at their school.

Finally, the Digital Learning Environment averaged rating was 1.9. High-end technology resources such as laptops, LCD projectors, interactive boards, and iPads are provided for students in WCS. The district has implemented the BYOT initiative to leverage the availability of technology students used at home on a regular basis to be infused into their daily learning experiences in the classrooms. Although teachers are using technology tools to support and enhance classroom instruction, the team observed a small number of students using technology for the purposes of research, collaboration, or project development. Many teachers interviewed are in support of the possibilities of effective BYOT and expressed that additional training is needed to learn how best to incorporate the use of various devices in meaningful ways.
Williamson County Schools was thoughtful, purposeful, honest, and of high integrity in their approach to the accreditation process and internal review of the Standards and Indicators. The leadership by Superintendent Dr. Mike Looney, the Board of Education, district level staff, school administrators, teachers and school staff are to be applauded as their commitment to quality, excellence, high expectations and achievement for all students is demonstrated through their daily work. Williamson County Schools is to be congratulated on the continuation of positive upward trends in student learning, performance, organizational effectiveness, and overall continuous improvements. The continual population growth of the Franklin, Tennessee community can be attributed to the successes of the school district.

The AdvancED External Review Team expresses sincere thanks to WCS for hosting the External Review with high expectations of gaining additional insights from their education colleagues. As a result of the findings of this external review, the External Review Team recommends to the AdvancED Accreditation Commission that Williamson County Schools is granted a new five-year term of accreditation.

Required Actions

1. Develop a systemic plan to ensure all students are well known by at least one adult advocate in the school.

   Primary Indicator or Assurance: 3.9

   Student interviews revealed that some elementary, middle, and high schools have programs beyond what is typically offered that connect students with an adult in the schoolhouse. This practice is not yet systemic as stated in the WCS Self Assessment. Research suggests that partnership programs between children/youth and adults may be highly effective in building positive experiences, skills, and confidence.

2. Provide instructional services and support to meet all unique learning needs of students.

   Primary Indicator or Assurance: 3.12

   School site-visit and stakeholder interviews revealed that the current support for limited English proficient (LEP) students was limited. The system is aware that challenges exist as they strive to provide this necessary support for their students. Targeted focus will provide individual and academic support to help students with unique learning needs thrive in order to maximize their potential for success.
Part III: Addenda

Next Steps

The institution should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all 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. Develop action plans to address the Required Actions made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the Required Actions.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the institution's efforts to improve student performance and system effectiveness.
5. Following the External Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the Required Actions. Institutions are required to respond to all Required Actions. The Required Actions should be completed before the Accreditation Progress Report is submitted. The report will be reviewed at the state and national level to monitor and ensure that the system has implemented the necessary actions to complete the Required Actions. The accreditation status will be reviewed and acted upon based on the completion of the Required Actions and the resulting improvement.
6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the External Review, the Team submits the final report to AdvancED for review and for action by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and upon the institution. Upon receiving its accreditation, the institution should share its achievement with internal and external communities.

About AdvancED

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, along with 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 (founded 1917) joined NCA CASI and SACS CASI as part of AdvancED. AdvancED is the world's largest education community, representing 30,000 public and private schools and systems across the United States and in 75 countries worldwide and educating 16 million students. The Northwest Accreditation Commission joined the AdvancED network in 2011.
Today, NCA CASI, NWAC, and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED. Through AdvancED, NCA CASI, NWAC, and SACS CASI share research-based accreditation standards that cross state, regional, and national boundaries. Accompanying these standards is a unified accreditation process designed to help educational institutions continuously improve.