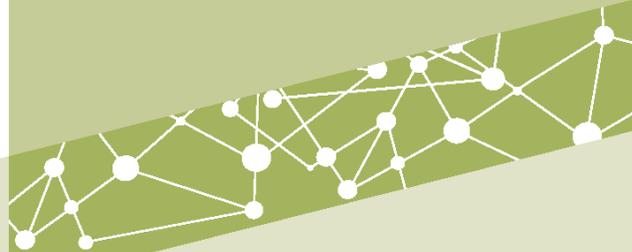


March 4-7, 2018



AdvancED® Engagement Review Report



AdvancED® Performance Accreditation

» **Results for:**
Oxford School District
224 Bramlett Blvd.
Oxford, MS 38655

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Introduction

AdvancED Performance Accreditation and the Engagement Review

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

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

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

Stakeholder Groups	Number
Superintendent	1
Board Members	5
Administrators	25
Instructional Staff	46
Support Staff	4
Students	36
Parents / Community Stakeholders	24
Total	141

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

Color	Rating	Description
Red	Needs Improvement	Identifies key areas that need more focused improvement efforts
Yellow	Emerging	Represents areas to enhance and extend current improvement efforts
Green	Meets Expectations	Pinpoints quality practices that meet the Standards
Blue	Exceeds Expectations	Demonstrates noteworthy practices producing clear results that exceed expectations

AdvancED Continuous Improvement System

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

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

Continuous Improvement Journey Narrative

The Oxford School District provided evidence of a commitment to systematic continuous improvement. The system’s current strategic plan was developed approximately seven years ago. A large group of stakeholders, both internal and external, were involved in the initial development of the plan. As a part of the process, participants discussed the system’s mission, vision, core values, and strategic goals. The system’s strategic goals include the following.

- Increase student achievement.
- Provide exceptional staff.
- Provide healthy, safe, secure, energy-efficient and drug-free campuses.
- Provide quality services to students, parents, faculty, staff and community.
- Manage financial resources prudently.
- Cultivate a partnership with parents and community.

A variety of data sources are collected and used as a part of the system’s continuous improvement planning process. Among the data sources utilized are the Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP), Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) developed by the Northwest Education Association (NWEA), American College Testing (ACT), and data related to the Advanced Placement (AP) exams. The system also collects a variety of survey data to measure stakeholder perceptions. The Engagement Review Team was very impressed by the level of data analysis that occurs throughout the system from the boardroom to the classroom.

Each year, the strategic plan is reviewed and revised when necessary. The review and revision of the strategic plan has primarily been a function of the Board of Education and the central office staff. The Engagement Review Team was particularly impressed with the method used to monitor and assess progress toward meeting the system’s strategic goals. For each goal, measurable indicators of success have been identified and these indicators are integrated into the superintendent’s evaluation for accountability purposes.

At the school level, the principal and school leadership teams identify goals that are aligned with the system’s strategic plan. The team did not find evidence of formal school-level improvement plans. School goals, however, become a part of the principals’ evaluations and progress toward meeting the school goals is monitored on a regular basis. During an interview with one principal, a comment was made that “the strategic plan definitely drives everything we do at the school level!”

The system has implemented a comprehensive process for monitoring and revising the strategic plan. There was clear evidence that the strategic plan drives the decision-making process throughout the system. While the current planning process is of high quality, the Engagement Review Team identified three areas where the continuous improvement process might be improved.

1. While a process is in place to ensure school goals are aligned with the system's strategic plan, the development of more formal school improvement plans with goals, interventions, and indicators of success might improve accountability and increase stakeholder support for improvement initiatives.
2. External stakeholders were involved with the initial development of the system's strategic plan. However, external stakeholders have not been involved in the review of the plan nor are external stakeholders involved with improvement planning at the school level. Finding opportunities for external stakeholders to be involved in the development and review of improvement plans might provide the system and schools with ideas and insights not currently a part of the continuous improvement process.
3. While there was evidence that the strategic plan was developed with input from internal and external stakeholders, parents and community members interviewed by the Engagement Review Team were not aware of progress being made toward meeting the strategic goals. Exploring additional strategies to communicate achievement of strategic goals to external stakeholders might build more ownership in the plan and increase community support.

Overall, the system has presented evidence of a strong commitment to continuous improvement. A systematic process is in place for the review, revision, and monitoring of the strategic plan. The strategic plan truly provides a road map for improving student achievement and overall organizational effectiveness.

AdvancED Standards Diagnostic Results

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

Leadership Capacity Domain

The capacity of leadership to ensure an institution's progress toward its stated objectives is an essential element of organizational effectiveness. An institution's leadership capacity includes the fidelity and commitment to its purpose and direction, the effectiveness of governance and leadership to enable the institution to realize its stated objectives, the ability to engage and involve stakeholders in meaningful and productive ways, and the capacity to implement strategies that improve learner and educator performance.

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

Learning Capacity Domain

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

Learning Capacity Standards		Rating
2.1	Learners have equitable opportunities to develop skills and achieve the content and learning priorities established by the system.	Emerging
2.2	The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation and collaborative problem-solving.	Exceeds Expectations
2.3	The learning culture develops learners' attitudes, beliefs and skills needed for success.	Exceeds Expectations
2.4	The system has a formal structure to ensure learners develop positive relationships with and have adults/peers that support their educational experiences.	Meets Expectations
2.5	Educators implement a curriculum that is based on high expectations and prepares learners for their next levels.	Exceeds Expectations
2.6	The system implements a process to ensure the curriculum is aligned to standards and best practices.	Exceeds Expectations
2.7	Instruction is monitored and adjusted to meet individual learners' needs and the system's learning expectations.	Exceeds Expectations

Learning Capacity Standards		Rating
2.8	The system provides programs and services for learners' educational future and career planning.	Emerging
2.9	The system implements processes to identify and address the specialized needs of learners.	Emerging
2.10	Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.	Exceeds Expectations
2.11	Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to demonstrable improvement of student learning.	Exceeds Expectations
2.12	The system implements a process to continuously assess its programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning.	Exceeds Expectations

Resource Capacity Domain

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

Resource Capacity Standards		Rating
3.1	The system plans and delivers professional learning to improve the learning environment, learner achievement, and the system's effectiveness.	Exceeds Expectations
3.2	The system's professional learning structure and expectations promote collaboration and collegiality to improve learner performance and organizational effectiveness.	Exceeds Expectations
3.3	The system provides induction, mentoring, and coaching programs that ensure all staff members have the knowledge and skills to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness.	Meets Expectations
3.4	The system attracts and retains qualified personnel who support the system's purpose and direction.	Exceeds Expectations
3.5	The system integrates digital resources into teaching, learning, and operations to improve professional practice, student performance, and organizational effectiveness.	Meets Expectations
3.6	The system provides access to information resources and materials to support the curriculum, programs, and needs of students, staff, and the system.	Exceeds Expectations
3.7	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning and use of resources in support of the system's purpose and direction.	Exceeds Expectations
3.8	The system allocates human, material, and fiscal resources in alignment with the system's identified needs and priorities to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness.	Exceeds Expectations

Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®)

Results

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

eleot® Observations	
Total Number of eleot® Observations	40
Environments	Rating
Equitable Learning Environment	3.40
Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs	2.80
Learners have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	3.98
Learners are treated in a fair, clear and consistent manner	3.95
Learners demonstrate and/or have opportunities to develop empathy/respect/appreciation for differences in abilities, aptitudes, backgrounds, cultures, and/or other human characteristics, conditions and dispositions	2.88
High Expectations Environment	3.29
Learners strive to meet or are able to articulate the high expectations established by themselves and/or the teacher	3.15
Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	3.50
Learners demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work	3.17
Learners engage in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks that require the use of higher order thinking (e.g., analyzing, applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	3.42
Learners take responsibility for and are self-directed in their learning	3.17
Supportive Learning Environment	3.80
Learners demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful	3.83
Learners take risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	3.83
Learners are supported by the teacher, their peers and/or other resources to understand content and accomplish tasks	3.73
Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher	3.83
Active Learning Environment	3.46
Learners' discussions/dialogues/exchanges with each other and the teacher predominate	3.60
Learners make connections from content to real-life experiences	2.98
Learners are actively engaged in the learning activities	3.83
Learners collaborate with their peers to accomplish/complete projects, activities, tasks and/or assignments	3.45
Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment	3.25
Learners monitor their own learning progress or have mechanisms whereby their learning progress is monitored	3.05
Learners receive/respond to feedback (from teachers/peers/other resources) to improve understanding and/or revise work	3.58
Learners demonstrate and/or verbalize understanding of the lesson/content	3.45
Learners understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed	2.92

eleot® Observations	
Total Number of eleot® Observations	40
Environments	Rating
Well-Managed Learning Environment	3.72
Learners speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other	3.88
Learners demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others	3.90
Learners transition smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another	3.42
Learners use class time purposefully with minimal wasted time or disruptions	3.67
Digital Learning Environment	2.67
Learners use digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	2.75
Learners use digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	2.70
Learners use digital tools/technology to communicate and/or work collaboratively for Learning	2.58

eleot® Narrative

The Engagement Review Team conducted 40 classroom observations during the onsite Engagement Review using the eleot® instrument. The team observed classrooms at all grade levels and in all content areas, including fine arts, pre-kindergarten, and engineering. The overall eleot rating was 3.39 on a four-point scale. The Supportive Learning (3.80) and Well-Managed Learning (3.72) Environments were the highest rated areas. The Digital Learning (2.67) Environment was the lowest rated area.

The Engagement Review Team observed several consistent strategies being used across the system classrooms. Team members mentioned seeing learning objectives posted and referenced by teachers in most classrooms. Word walls and other instructional aides were visible, as well as exemplars of student work. Cooperative learning groups were observed in several classrooms and team members mentioned that teachers consistently used positive verbal feedback during discussions. Data walls were also visible in many classrooms for tracking student progress.

As previously mentioned, the Engagement Review Team rated the Supportive Learning Environment as one of the two highest rated areas. Team members noticed a sense of community and positive interactions between students and teachers with mutual respect for one another. One team member commented that students seemed to be quite comfortable taking risks and volunteering responses to questions even when the students were not sure if they knew the correct answer. Teachers provided appropriate support for students who were struggling and students were observed helping other students in some classes.

The Well-Managed Learning Environment also was rated highly by the Engagement Review Team. The students followed classroom rules and transitioned well from one activity to another. In most classrooms, students were on task with little wasted time. One team member mentioned that a minor confrontation was observed between a teacher and student. The teacher remained calm and managed the situation professionally by firmly requesting that the student leave the classroom. What could have been a major distraction was handled with minimal interruption of instruction. Other team members also mentioned that classroom management appeared to be a strength of the system.

During deliberations, team members cited several specific examples of quality student engagement. One team member mentioned the use of developmentally appropriate learning centers in the elementary classrooms. Students were actively engaged in a variety of activities while the teacher was providing small group instruction. During a social studies class, students were working on a Biographical Wax Museum project. Students conducted research and wrote biographies of famous people. As in a wax museum, students dressed as the famous person

and stood with a button in front of them. When the button was pushed, the students recited facts about the famous person and how the person wanted to be remembered. All students were actively engaged as the famous people or as people visiting the wax museum. In an art class, one team member observed the teacher modeling during a lesson related to creating optical illusions. Students were asked to develop three different patterns to fill an 8x8 grid of one-inch squares. The teacher completed a representation of what was expected of the students as she facilitated the class. Overall, the team validated that a positive learning climate existed throughout the system with a high degree of student engagement.

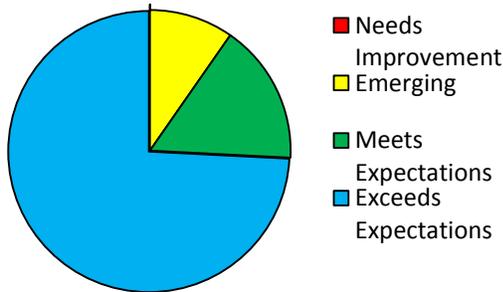
While the Engagement Review Team observed teaching excellence in many classrooms, there were a few areas where there is room for improvement. Differentiation of instruction was observed in some classrooms, but differentiation was not consistently observed throughout the system. The eleot item related to students engaging in differentiated learning opportunities was one of the lowest rated items (2.80) across the system's classrooms. Other areas rated relatively low by the Engagement Review Team were related to students having opportunities to learn about other cultures (2.88), students understanding how their work is assessed (2.92), and students making connections from content being taught to real-life experiences (2.98).

As previously mentioned, the Engagement Review Team rated the Digital Learning Environment lower than the other environments. The Engagement Review Team did, however, observe technology being used very effectively in some classrooms. In one class, students were asked to write paragraphs related to the books they read. Then, the students made a video record of the characters in their paragraphs and each video was critically reviewed by other students. In another class, students were using graphing calculators to study the impact changes in equation coefficients had on the direction and shape of the graphs for the equations. The Engagement Review Team did not observe students using technology in some classrooms and, in other classrooms, the team observed technology being used more as a substitution tool as opposed to a tool to enhance teaching and learning. One team member cited a class in which students were using iPads to review content that had previously been taught. Students did not seem to take the activity seriously and were not actively engaged. Overall, the team concluded that student use of technology was probably higher than in many systems, but there is still a need for additional training to ensure all teachers are using technology effectively.

In conclusion, the Engagement Review Team found supportive and well-managed learning environments throughout the system. Students and teachers appeared to have developed positive relationships and most teachers exhibited a clear commitment to helping their students succeed. The level of student engagement was high in most classrooms observed, but differentiation was not consistently observed in all classrooms. There was also some inconsistency in regard to the rigor in each classroom. Some teachers set high expectations and focused on problem-solving and critical thinking skills while other teachers asked primarily yes/no type questions with little rigor or expectations for high level thinking by students. Finally, student use of technology as a learning tool was observed in some classrooms. However, there is room for improvement in the way technology is being used to enhance teaching and learning.

Findings

The chart below provides an overview of the institution ratings across the three Domains.



Rating	Number of Standards
Needs Improvement	0
Emerging	3
Meets Expectations	5
Exceeds Expectations	23

Powerful Practices

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

Powerful Practice #1

The system has developed comprehensive, systematic processes to ensure effective implementation of the instructional program and programs that support teaching and learning.

Primary Standard: 1.7

Evidence: During interviews with teachers and administrators, the Engagement Review Team learned that the system utilizes data effectively to monitor all operations of the system. The team was particularly impressed by the system’s use of data to monitor the effectiveness of support services such as maintenance and transportation. An administrative institute is held in the summer for the purpose of reviewing strategic goals and developing implementation strategies for the upcoming school year. The Board of Education has identified indicators to measure progress toward meeting the strategic goals and these indicators have been integrated into the superintendent’s evaluation to ensure administrative accountability. School level goals that support the strategic goals are also integrated into the principals’ evaluations. All stakeholders indicated that high expectations are a part of the system’s culture and students, parents, teachers, support staff members, administrators, and the Board of Education hold each other accountable for meeting these expectations.

Powerful Practice #2

The system utilizes a variety of strategies for the collection and analysis of stakeholder feedback data to support the continuous improvement process.

Primary Standard: 1.10

Evidence: Through a review of artifacts and interviews with stakeholders, the Engagement Review Team confirmed that the system collects feedback from stakeholders in many ways. AdvancED surveys and inventories were used to gain insights related to stakeholder perceptions and classroom experiences. Annual needs assessments are administrated to solicit input related to professional development and technology. The Board of Education encourages input when important decisions need to be made including the revision of system policies. During interviews, parents and community partners raved about the willingness of system and school leaders to

listen to community concerns and respond to those concerns. Artifacts included Parent / Community Involvement and Engagement Plans that each school is required to develop for the purpose of clearly identifying initiatives to increase involvement and provide opportunities for stakeholder feedback. During one interview, an administrator specifically mentioned counseling service modifications that were made in response to data collected on a student survey. During his interview, the superintendent commented that “the system now receives around 55 percent of our revenue from local taxpayers, so we had better listen to what they have to say!”

Powerful Practice #3

The system has implemented a variety of systematic processes to ensure the curriculum is aligned with high quality standards and best classroom instructional practices.

Primary Standard: 2.6

Evidence: During interviews with central office administrators, the Engagement Review Team learned that the system has implemented systematic processes to ensure the curriculum is aligned with the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards and best classroom instructional standards such as Marzano’s Compendium of Instructional Strategies. Among the artifacts reviewed by the team were samples of priority standards, proficiency scales, and pacing guides. These documents reflected a systematic approach to curriculum alignment and an effort to ensure teachers have a clear understanding of what is to be taught in their classrooms. The system has targeted resources to employ instructional coaches for the purpose of providing ongoing technical assistance and job-embedded professional development to support classroom teachers. The system has also provided the resources for the implementation of a robust professional learning community structure that provides teachers with the opportunity to discuss curricular issues, instructional strategies, and initiatives to meet the needs of all students.

Powerful Practice #4

The system has designed and implemented procedures for the collection and analysis of student performance data that permeate all aspects of the instructional program.

Primary Standard: 2.11

Evidence: During the Improvement Journey presentation, the superintendent presented student performance data collected by the system from a variety of sources. Among the sources were the Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP), Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) developed by the Northwest Education Association (NWEA), American College Testing (ACT), and data related to the Advanced Placement (AP) exams. Based upon interview responses, the Engagement Review Team confirmed that the central office staff carefully analyzes the data, identifies trends, and shares this information with staff members at each school. The data is systematically disaggregated to ensure teachers and administrators are able to track the performance of specific groups of students. While the process may differ from school-to-school, the team validated through interviews at each school that the data is systematically analyzed at the school level to identify any curriculum alignment issues and the learning needs of specific groups of students or individual students. Teachers and administrators confirmed that the system has implemented a comprehensive professional learning community structure to provide teachers with the opportunity to carefully analyze the data collected from summative and formative assessments to inform their instructional strategies. Processes are also in place to ensure students and parents understand the meaning of the assessment data. In some schools, teachers meet with students to go over performance data and set goals for improvement. Data meetings are also offered to parents to ensure parents have a good understanding of how their children are progressing. High quality data collection and analysis clearly provides a foundation for the system’s continuous improvement process.

Powerful Practice #5

The system utilizes a comprehensive budgeting process for the allocation of resources to support teaching and learning.

Primary Standard: 3.8

Evidence: The Engagement Review Team was provided with a variety of artifacts related to budgeting and the allocation of resources. Among the artifacts reviewed were the complete 2017-18 budget, a budget cash flow chart, a monthly tax revenue graph, and a status chart that is used to monitor the budget. As with other aspects of system operations, the team learned that data is used extensively during the budget planning process. During the Improvement Journey presentation, the Director of Operations provided information related to the data used to monitor the maintenance and transportation programs. For example, a careful study of bus routes led to the reduction of routes from 43 to 28. The funds saved from the reduction of routes was able to be used to support other system priorities. The Engagement Review Team also learned, during interviews, that the system's strategic plan is integral to budget planning and the allocation of resources. One administrator mentioned that "the strategic plan drives everything we do!" The team learned that resources were allocated to increasing the number of instructional coaches and implementation of the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program as a direct response to needs identified to meet the system's strategic goals. The system clearly has implemented a systematic process to meet its fiduciary responsibilities and allocate resources to support teaching and learning.

Opportunities for Improvement

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

Opportunity for Improvement #1

Explore and implement strategies to provide students with increased access to programs related to academic and career planning.

Primary Standard: 2.8

Evidence: During interviews with administrators, the Engagement Review Team learned that the system has employed counselors to support students in all schools. The high school principal mentioned that there were three counselors at his school. The team learned that the counselors use the Naviance program as a career pathway tracking system to ensure high school students have a clear graduation path that meets their career choice goals. However, the team also learned that options to expand opportunities beyond the tracking system were limited. Responses on the middle and high school student inventory indicated that 54 percent of students claimed that they never use the services provided by counselors and another 31 percent indicated that they utilize the services only once or twice a year. During interviews, parents mentioned that there was a need for more support for students during the college application process. One parent commented that "I am sure the counselors are working hard, but maybe they just need more counselors to meet the needs of all students!" One administrator also commented that the community has very high expectations for counseling services and providing academic, career, and college planning support to meet the needs of all students was a challenge.

Improvement Priorities

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

Improvement Priority #1

Identify and implement specific research-based instructional strategies to enhance academic rigor and provide robust differentiated instruction to improve the achievement of all students.

Primary Standard: 2.1

Evidence: During the Improvement Journey presentation, the superintendent provided the Engagement Review Team with a wide range of student performance data. The data indicated that students in the system generally score at or above state and national averages in all content areas and at all grade levels. As noted by the superintendent, however, achievement gaps exist for African American students, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and limited English proficiency students. Based upon data collected from the Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP), the achievement gap decreased for African American students, economically disadvantaged students, and limited English proficiency students over the past two years. The achievement gap increased for students with disabilities over the same timeframe. In addition to student performance data, the eleot data collected by the Engagement Review Team indicated that differentiated learning opportunities for students with varying academic needs are inconsistently provided in all system classrooms. During interviews with school and system leaders, the team did learn that interventions are being implemented to address the achievement gaps including expansion of the pre-kindergarten program, implementation of the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program, and improvements in the Response to Intervention (RtI) program.

Improvement Priority #2

Develop and implement programs to meet the specialized learning needs of all students, including those students who are not college-bound.

Primary Standard: 2.9

Evidence: During interviews with the system and community leaders, the Engagement Review Team learned that the community culture tends to be focused upon those students planning to attend college. A review of the master schedule and the System Quality Factors Diagnostic revealed that students have access to four Career Technical Education (CTE) programs. Students seeking CTE classes often must attend the School of Applied Technology that offers classes to students from various high schools in the area. The high school principal mentioned that attending this school can be problematic from a scheduling standpoint due to the need for students to travel to and from the school. During interviews, both the superintendent and the high school principal indicated that providing additional opportunities for non-college bound students was essential for the system to meet the needs of all students. During an interview, one member of the Board of Education mentioned the need for more opportunities for non-college bound students. This board member also indicated that additional facilities for CTE programs at the high school are part of the new building program recently approved by taxpayers.

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

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

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

Institution IEQ	370.07
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Conclusion Narrative

The Oxford School District consists of seven schools located in Oxford, Mississippi. Through interviews, a review of evidence, observations, and deliberations, the Engagement Review Team identified several themes related to the system’s continuous improvement efforts. High expectations are clearly evident throughout the system. A strategic plan drives the decision-making process and the strategic goals have been integrated into the superintendent’s evaluation to ensure administrative accountability. System leaders encourage collaboration, both internally and externally. Internal collaboration occurs between administrators and professional learning communities have been formed to support collaboration between teachers and other staff members. A number of community partnerships have been established to enhance collaboration with the community served by the system. The governing body has supported continuous improvement efforts by instituting systematic processes for the allocation of resources and the regular review and revision of policies. System leadership has also implemented multiple communication strategies to keep stakeholders informed of the system’s improvement initiatives.

The system has placed a strong emphasis on educating the “whole” student. Child nutrition is a very important focus of the system. A program called “Good Food for Oxford Schools” has been established to ensure students are eating properly to support their learning. “Love Packs” are prepared so that needy students have meals over the weekends and free meals are offered to students over the summer. The high school has implemented a program called “Do you really know me?” that involves staff members meeting with groups of students for the purpose of getting to know the students and listening to their concerns. The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program has also recently been implemented to provide additional support for at-risk students and help them become college and career ready.

Data is effectively used for decision-making from the boardroom to the classroom. Numerous data sources were used during the development of the system’s strategic plan and data is also used to monitor the progress being made toward meeting the system’s strategic goals. Teachers and principals use formative and summative assessments to identify gaps and overlaps in the curriculum as well as to identify the learning needs of students. Stakeholder feedback data, via surveys and inventories, is collected and analyzed to provide insights related to stakeholder perceptions and classroom experiences. The use of data also extends to the system’s support services such as maintenance and transportation. Clearly, a culture of data-driven decision-making has been deeply embedded in the system.

As with all high performing schools, the system has a laser-like focus on teaching and learning. The curriculum is

well-defined and aligned with high quality standards. Principals and teachers are dedicated to implementing best practice strategies for effective delivery of the curriculum to students. A formal professional development plan is in place that includes job-embedded training provided by dedicated instructional coaches. During classroom visits, the Engagement Review Team observed active student engagement, well managed classrooms, and a supportive learning environment. Students were polite and well behaved and many students appeared to be self-directed learners. As one team member stated, “there is a positive learning environment in all of the system schools!”

Along with a number of strengths, the Engagement Review Team also identified some areas where the system faces challenges. As noted by the superintendent in the Improvement Journey presentation, the system has persistent achievement gaps for African American students, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and limited English speaking students. While the most recent data indicates that the gap is decreasing for some groups of students, the achievement gap for students with disabilities has continued to increase. The system has identified some initiatives to reduce or eliminate the achievement gaps. Among these initiatives are the expansion of the pre-kindergarten program and implementation of the AVID program. The system is also exploring options to modify the Response to Intervention program to more effectively meet the needs of all students. The Engagement Review Team validated during classroom observations that Tier 1 instruction could be improved by providing more differentiated learning opportunities for students and increasing the rigor in some classrooms.

The Oxford School District is located in a community that also includes a major university. For this reason, the Engagement Review Team learned that there is an emphasis on preparation for college. The team also learned, however, that some students do not plan to attend college and opportunities for these students are limited. Some students attend the School of Applied Technology, but scheduling can be a problem for students due to the travel involved. The superintendent indicated that this is an area where improvement is needed and providing additional opportunities for apprenticeships, national skill certifications, and cooperative education experiences will enhance learning experiences for some students whose opportunities are currently limited.

Finally, the Engagement Review Team learned during interviews with parents that there is a need to increase the accessibility of counselors, particularly at the high school. One parent made a point to not place the blame on the current counselors, but she indicated that students needed additional assistance when searching for scholarships and completing the college admission process. Increased accessibility could also lead to additional opportunities for counseling in the areas of school-to-work and career readiness. Student inventory responses indicated that many students do not use counseling services on a regular basis. The system has attempted to use technology to complement the services provided by guidance counselors. Implementation of the Naviance program is intended to align student strengths with post-secondary college and career goals. During interviews, central office and school level administrators confirmed that there is a need to study options for increasing student accessibility to counseling services.

In conclusion, the Improvement Priorities identified by the Engagement Review Team are intended to address the overarching priorities the system should address to improve student learning and overall organizational effectiveness. The Oxford School District exemplifies a system that has made a commitment to continuous improvement. In order to reach the system’s full potential, there is a need to implement systematic processes to improve teaching and learning. Differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all students and increasing the rigor in some classrooms will enhance teaching effectiveness and improve overall student achievement. Providing additional opportunities for non-college bound students will also help meet the needs of some students that currently may not be achieving at the level expected by stakeholders. Addressing the Improvement Priorities in a comprehensive manner will make a very good school system even better!

Next Steps

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

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

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

Team Roster

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

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
Steve Epperson	Dr. Steven Epperson earned a B.S. in mathematics from Eureka College, an M.S.E. in educational administration from Illinois State University, and completed his doctoral work in educational organization and leadership at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He taught middle school and high school mathematics for 16 years before becoming a school administrator. Epperson served as a high school principal for three years before working as a school district superintendent for 13 years. Dr. Epperson retired as Superintendent of Roselle School District 12 in 2007. After retirement, he served as Interim Director of University Laboratory High School in Urbana, IL for two years. Epperson currently provides consulting services for Ideal Environmental Engineering and serves as an adjunct professor in school finance at the University of Illinois. He has extensive experience with AdvancED through his work as an educational consultant, facilitating STEM training for schools, and leading Engagement Reviews throughout the United States.

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
Barbara Flore	<p>Dr. Barbara J. Flore has been employed with the West Bolivar Consolidated School District for the past 17 years and has served in the capacity of Director of Curriculum, Instructions & Assessments, District Test Coordinator, Professional Development Coordinator, PBIS Coordinator, Pre-K-12th Grade Principal, and classroom teacher. She also served as an adjunct professor for Coahoma Community College for 14 years and was the director of a 21st Century Learning Center for five years. Dr.Flore’s responsibilities with the district include training the administrative staff in the implementation of the instructional supervision and evaluation program, monitoring the instructional program and materials, working with the superintendent to articulate and promote the school system’s vision of learning and teaching, ensuring that staff development and testing plans support school improvement plans, and serving as a resource person in planning and conducting in-service educational activities for the improvement of teaching practices in the areas of test construction, test administration, and test results evaluation. Dr. Flore has a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration, a Master’s in Elementary Education, a Specialist in Elementary Education, a Specialist in Administration and Supervision, and a PhD in Psychology and Counseling from Maranatha Christian College and an ABD in Community College Leadership from Mississippi State University.</p>
Vicki Davidson	<p>Dr. Vicki Davidson is the Executive Director of advanced learning programs of study for Jackson Public School District in Mississippi. The Jackson Public School District is the second largest school district in the state, serving over 27,000 students. As Executive Director, she guides and monitors the areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional growth and learning opportunities, particularly related to advanced academic programs of study including, but not limited to, the International Baccalaureate® program, the Montessori Program, the Advanced Placement® program, gifted education, dual enrollment and credit, and arts education for students. In addition, she served as interim Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction for the district during personnel transitioning. Prior to her district appointment, Davidson served as a division director for the Office of Reading, Early Childhood, and Language Arts of the Mississippi Department of Education. Davidson has a 17 year career in public education that includes service as a public school teacher and a public university graduate instructor. Notable educational and professional accomplishments include receiving a Bachelor’s Degree in English Education from Tougaloo College, a Master’s Degree in Education from Mississippi College, a Doctoral Degree in K-12 Education from the University of Mississippi, certification in teaching English as a second language, certification in Instructional Leadership from the National Institute for School Leadership, administrator licensure through the Mississippi Department of Education, and serving as an AdvancED associate lead evaluator and team member for school and system accreditation in Mississippi.</p>

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
Rick Smith	<p>Rick Smith is the Director for Student Affairs for the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science. His responsibilities include supervision of all aspects of student life, including residence life, athletics, transportation, and food and health services. He also serves as the school’s liaison with the Mississippi University for Women. Mr. Smith holds an Education Specialist’s Degree in Instructional Technology from Mississippi State University, an MS in Secondary Education with an emphasis in Mass Media, and a BS in Secondary Education with emphases in Speech Education, Journalism, and English. He has over 27 years of experience in education, having served as a classroom teacher, technology coordinator, and administrator. He is also a member of the board of directors for the Mississippi Association of School Administrators, a past president of the Mississippi Educational Computing Association, and a former member of the Council for Education Facility Planners International.</p>
Tracy Smitherman	<p>Dr. Tracy Smitherman has been employed with the Alabama Department of Youth Services School District since 1997 in various capacities. Currently, she holds the title of Curriculum & Federal Programs Coordinator. Dr. Smitherman received her Doctorate and Educational Specialist degrees in Educational Leadership, Policy and Law from Alabama State University, Montgomery, Alabama. She received her Master’s Degree in Administration and Supervision from Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, Louisiana and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Human Environmental Science from the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Dr. Smitherman has served as acting superintendent, educational director, educational coordinator, principal and teacher. She is presently on and serves as officer on various advisory and research committees statewide. Dr. Smitherman is a member of an assortment of professional associations such as National Education Association and International Correctional Education Association. Currently, she is on the Editorial Board for <i>The Journal of Correctional Education</i>. Dr. Smitherman has published numerous articles, papers and a curriculum guide in the areas of School Finance, Curriculum Development and Superintendent and Administrator Certification. She has presented at National and International Conferences such as the Correctional Education Association International Conference, National Council of Professors of Educational Administration, and the Southern Regional Council of Educational Administration Conference during her career. She has lead and served on numerous AdvancED Engagement Review Teams as both a team leader and member.</p>



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About AdvancED

AdvancED is a non-profit, non-partisan organization serving the largest community of education professionals in the world. Founded on more than 100 years of work in continuous improvement, AdvancED combines the knowledge and expertise of a research institute, the skills of a management consulting firm and the passion of a grassroots movement for educational change to empower Pre-K-12 schools and school systems to ensure that all learners realize their full potential.

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