External Review

Franklin Special School District

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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.

Standard	Standard Performance Level

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.		3.75
Indicator	**Source of Evidence**	**Performance Level**
1.1 The system engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a system-wide purpose for student success.	•Interviews •Governing body policies, procedures, and practices •District purpose statements - past and present •Survey results •Written District Quality Assurance Review procedures and documents that monitor its schools' adherence to the district purpose and direction •Examples of communications to stakeholders about the district's purpose (i.e. website, newsletters, annual report, student handbook) •Minutes from meetings related to development of the district's purpose and direction •Copy of strategic plan referencing the district purpose and direction and its effectiveness •Accreditation Report •Communication plan to stakeholders regarding the district's purpose	4
1.2 The system ensures that each school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	•Survey results •Agendas and/or minutes that reference a commitment to the components of the schools' purpose statements •Written District Quality Assurance Review procedures and documents that monitor schools' adherence to the district purpose and direction and that of the school •Examples of school purpose statements if different from the district purpose statement •Accreditation Report •Interviews	4

1.3	The school leadership and staff at all levels of the system commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning and supports challenging, equitable educational programs and learning experiences for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills.	•Interviews •District Quality Assurance Review plans that document two-way communication on district and school effectiveness and learning, thinking, and life skills •Examples of schools' continuous improvement plans •Survey results •Accreditation Report •Statements or documents about ethical and professional practices •Professional development plans and implementation timelines on topics related to equity, organizational effectiveness, and improved instruction and programs •Statements of shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning •The district strategic plan	4
1.4	Leadership at all levels of the system implement a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	•Interviews •Accreditation Report •Examples of schools continuous improvement plans •District Quality Assurance Review plans that document two-way communication on district and school effectiveness and learning, thinking, and life skills •Survey results •Professional development plans and implementation timelines on topics related to equity, organizational effectiveness, and improved instruction and programs •Agenda, minutes from continuous improvement planning meetings •The district data profile •The district strategic plan	3

Powerful Practices   *Indicator*

1. The Franklin Special School District (FSSD) vision and mission statements were developed through a comprehensive process that involved all levels of stakeholders and focused clearly on high expectations for student success. Clear explanations informed the External Review Team of the comprehensive process used to analyze the mission and vision statements, to ensure district purpose statement and beliefs alignment, and to communicate that process to stakeholders. This process became the framework for the design and writing of the new five year Strategic Plan
accepted by the Board of Education in February 2013.

   The district informs stakeholders through written communications, invitations to participate in committee work, and the consistent presence of the Director of Schools in the community. Interviews with representatives from community partnerships further validated the knowledge and understanding of the district's commitment to educational excellence and its caring concern for every child.

   Strong, successful school districts value broad stakeholder participation and create meaningful opportunities for all voices to be heard. The resulting two-way communication builds ownership and support for district expectations to be attained.

   1.1

2. Each school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success. The External Review Team found that student performance data at each school are maintained and monitored by building and district level personnel with feedback and training that is targeted to improve each school's commitment for student success. The team validated the result of this inclusive process. The preponderance of examples that focused on student success identified that a school purpose is clearly communicated to all stakeholders. While each school had its unique purpose statement, the underlying district beliefs were embedded at each school. Stakeholder interviews provided consistent evidence of the district-wide commitment to individual student success. Principals had data walls of student academic achievement that he/she monitored daily. These administrators went a step further and personalized their relationship with students who needed encouragement to believe in their own potential for success.

   Schools that utilize a comprehensive, inclusive process in creating a purpose focused on student success have a mechanism that will drive continuous improvement.

   1.2

3. District leadership and administrative staff maintain a laser-like focus on 1.3
"Excellence in Teaching and Learning for All" consistent with its purpose and
direction.
The External Review Team received multiple verifications of the district's
commitment to excellence from the Director of School's exemplary overview,
presentations from district and school staff, and stakeholder interviews - all of
which were clearly found in the daily life of each school. Administrators, teachers,
staff, students, parents, and community members commented on the district's care
and concern for each student, stating that there is no compromise on instruction.
Every child and every adult are all learners in an environment of successful
learners.

There has been notable growth in ethnic diversity, particularly in the Hispanic
population. Classroom visitations supported the equitable learning environments
and support offered to this unique population. In addition to academic assistance
offered by English Language Learner teachers who work in tandem with regular
education teachers, the district provides interpreters for enhanced parent
communication.

Equity was addressed two years ago by the district which resulted in the Board of
Education passing a Rezoning for School Equity Plan that moved the least number
of students, resulting in a more equitable distribution of students while allowing
most students to remain in their existing zones through the eighth grade. This plan
followed fourteen months of discussion and development with community
stakeholders and is in its first year of implementation.

A school culture that is rooted in common values and beliefs about teaching and
learning can withstand educational and social challenges without compromising
the success of the children.

Opportunities for Improvement   *Indicator*

1. Involve the community and all levels of the district to develop and implement a 1.4
continuous improvement process with a clear direction for improving learning that
will sustain the current high levels of student achievement.

Presently, FSSD schools have individual School Improvement Plans that align with
the FSSD Strategic Plan. These documents, supplemented with data profile
analyses, are reviewed and evaluated annually. Interview feedback and the
District Self-Assessment revealed an opportunity to improve this process by
expanding the audience to include parents and other community stakeholders. By
including all stakeholders, the district has an opportunity to hear more voices, to
internalize what parents need to understand about their child's learning in order to
promote better performance, and to pro-actively bridge the present curriculum and
the future transition into Common Core State Standards. For this expanded
participation to be successful, the district will need to find new venues for getting
stakeholders to participate. The strong partnerships that exist with community
agencies can be beneficial in this pursuit.

Broad stakeholder participation in decision-making drives schools to greater levels
of success while building a strong foundation of support for district and school
initiatives.

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.

Standard		Standard Performance Level
The system operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and system effectiveness.		3.83
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools.	•Interviews •Professional development plans •Student handbooks •Staff handbooks •Accreditation Report •District operations manuals •School handbooks	4

2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	•Governing authority minutes relating to training	4
		•Communication plan to inform all staff on code of ethics, responsibilities, conflict of interest	
		•Proof of legal counsel	
		•Governing authority training plan	
		•Assurances, certifications	
		•Accreditation Report	
		•Findings of internal and external reviews of compliance with laws, regulations, and policies	
		•Historical compliance data	
		•Interviews	
		•Governing authority policies on roles and responsibilities, conflict of interest	
		•Governing code of ethics	
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	4
		•District strategic plan	
		•Examples of school improvement plans	
		•Roles and responsibilities of school leadership	
		•Roles and responsibilities of district leadership	
		•Interviews	
		•Social media	
		•Accreditation Report	
		•Survey results regarding functions of the governing authority and operations of the district	
		•Maintenance of consistent academic oversight, planning, and resource allocation	
		•Agendas and minutes of meetings	

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 •Professional development offerings and plans •Examples of collaboration and shared leadership •Examples of decisions aligned with the school's purpose statement •Interviews •Survey results •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	4
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction.	•Accreditation Report •Interviews •Copies of surveys or screen shots from online surveys •Survey responses •Involvement of stakeholders in a school improvement plan •Communication plan	3
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice in all areas of the system and improved student success.	•Interviews •Examples of professional development offerings and plans tied specifically to the results from supervision and evaluation •Accreditation Report •Governing body policy on supervision and evaluation •Job specific criteria •Supervision and evaluation documents with criteria for improving professional practice throughout the system and student success noted •Representative supervision and evaluation reports	4

Powerful Practices	*Indicator*

1. Franklin Special School District Board of Education (BOE) consistently establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the district and its schools.
The External Review Team found consistent evidence of quality policy development, implementation, and review that is supportive of FSSD's vision, mission, and purpose. Decisions are based on the alignment of practices with the beliefs of the district for every child. Policies are reviewed annually and are placed on BOE Committee meetings and School Board agendas, and results are communicated to stakeholders.

   The BOE consists of six non-paid at-large members, many of whom have served multiple terms and have consistently received Tennessee School Board Association recognition. This board of public servants creates and reviews policies that are divided into six categories: Board Operations, Fiscal Management, Support Services, Instructional Services, Personnel, and Students. Mechanisms are in place for monitoring policies and practices that support student learning, effective instruction, and assessment to ensure the FSSD vision of "Excellence in Teaching and Learning for All."

   Interviews with BOE members verified that both policy formation and decision-making are linked to the districts desired outcomes for excellence. Stakeholder interviews further validated the community's trust and appreciation for the professional manner in which the BOE operates as well as their dedication to visionary thinking and planning.

   Effective Boards of Education embrace the culture that they represent and create a sound foundation for excellence through clear policies and practices that will ensure high levels of success for all students and personnel.

   Indicator 2.1

2. The FSSD Board of Education (BOE) operates responsibly and functions effectively as evidenced in the community support they continue to generate, appreciation they have garnered, and recognitions they have received.

   The FSSD BOE has historically worked in unity which has enabled them to be a highly effective policy-making body. They have implemented a process to evaluate board decisions and actions to ensure a clear distinction in their roles and responsibilities. They adhere to a code of conduct and ethics, and operate free of conflict of interest. Training and professional development are important components of their roles as BOE members with all members meeting and/or exceeding state board requirements. Three current members hold Level V boardsmanship status which is the highest level in Tennessee. The FSSD BOE has also been named the TSBA "Board of Distinction" three times by the Tennessee School Board Association.
Recent accomplishments of the BOE include the establishment of a new Five Year Strategic Plan and a Rezoning for School Equity Plan implemented in 2012-2013. Their performance is hallmarked by a history of proactive, visionary decision-making.

   Education boards that operate responsibly and work effectively establish a model for their schools to follow in the quest for excellence.

   Indicator 2.2

3. The Board of Education clearly understands its responsibility and enables the Director of Schools and school leadership to carry out daily school functions without interference.   2.3
    The Franklin Special School District Organizational Chart documented the roles and responsibilities of all personnel with clear lines of supervision delineated. The unique feature of this chart is its reverse structure. While many school district organizational charts begin with the Board of Education at the top of the chart, FSSD's model has the BOE as the foundation for all activities and decisions. This reverse model has students and parents as the top focal point, thus aligning with the district's beliefs and mission to provide excellence in education for all of its students. This organizational model is just one of many intentional efforts to develop a culture that is continually linked to the vision of "Excellence in Teaching and Learning for All."

    Stakeholder interviews provided additional evidence that district and school leadership have the autonomy needed to operate without BOE interference. This evidence indicated a balanced approach by the BOE to be visible and supportive while enabling leadership to function free of micro-management.

    Clear understanding and implementation of the roles of a governing board and the leadership it serves empowers all leaders to design organizational and operational practices that support district and school goals and promote the purpose of each institution.

4. Intentional leadership practices permeate throughout district operations and support FSSD's purpose and direction.   2.4
    As the External Review Team conducted interviews, heard presentations, and examined artifacts, a theme of intentional leadership began to form. Leadership in FSSD is closely connected to the existing culture of excellence and conducts business the Franklin way---with kindness, encouragement, care, and compassion.

    From the exemplary overview given by the Director of Schools, it was immediately established that people are at the core of all decisions made in FSSD. All staff members and students are considered learners and leaders. When the vision of "Excellence in Teaching and Learning for All" is interpreted, it is comprehensively inclusive of all internal stakeholders. This transparent, shared leadership model is reflective in district and school collaboration through on-going planning meetings of Principals and Central Office staff, the Director's Advisory Team, the Executive PTO Parent meetings, and school leadership teams. Decisions are made based on the needs of individual schools and students. The recent Rezoning for School Equity Plan, as well as instructional decisions, are evidential of both intentional leadership and alignment with district and school purpose and direction. With such concerted effort to meet and exceed district expectations, the recognition of the Franklin Special School District as a Tennessee Exemplary District by the Tennessee Department of Education is well-founded.

    School districts maximize their potential to reach high expectations when focused on the district's purpose and direction. Alignment strengthens the organization's work to reach desired outcomes.

5. The primary focus of supervision and evaluation processes in FSSD is improving professional practice and ensuring student success across the district.   2.6
    The FSSD Board Policy Manual addresses supervision and evaluation of district personnel with a strong emphasis on professional development among all entities: Board of Education, Director of Schools, Central Office Staff, and all school building personnel. To enable professional growth, the district budget has a line item to finance and promote professional development. Nationally known trainers and speakers are brought in for advancement purposes, based on needs identified at each school and across the district. Teachers are also encouraged to attain National Board Certification, with the district budget supporting this extra certification.

    The Director of Schools and his staff are given annual goals followed by an evaluation of performance. Building level personnel are mentored, monitored, evaluated, and recognized across the district. As stated in one of the beliefs, FSSD believes that success should be celebrated. Such a recognition ceremony was held during the External Review Team visit. Recognition for excellent performance and achievement is embedded within the Franklin culture.

    The purposes for performance evaluation are two-fold: 1) to improve the skills of the instructional and administrative staffs and 2) to impact student success. From these two platforms, building level assessments are conducted through formal and informal processes. Conferencing and mentoring are an integral part of the process, with an emphasis on professional growth and addressing specific student needs. Stakeholders verified the on-going physical presence of district and school leadership in the classrooms and the follow-up support that is consistently included in the evaluation process.

    When district personnel "inspect what they expect" the quality of all operations will improve. Doing this systemically and systematically supports sustainable continuous improvement in all areas.

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.

Standard		Standard Performance Level
The system's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning across all grades and courses.		3.67
Indicator		**Source of Evidence**	**Performance Level**
3.1	The system's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at the next level.	•Learning expectations for different courses and programs •Interviews •Survey results •Lesson plans •Observations •Teacher evaluation criteria relating to prescribed instructional designs and proprietary practices •Posted learning objectives •Accreditation Report	4
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 •Accreditation Report •Common assessments •Standards-based report cards •Surveys results •Observations •Interviews •Teacher evaluation criteria relating to prescribed instructional designs and proprietary practices •Lesson plans aligned to the curriculum •Design Teams Assessment Calendar Multiple Assessments	4

Note: The table structure above combines the Standard header and Indicator sub-tables. The columns are: Indicator, Description, Source of Evidence, Performance Level.

3.3	Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	•Examples of professional development offerings and plans tied specifically to the results from supervision and evaluation •Authentic assessments •Examples of teacher use of technology as an instructional resource •Student work demonstrating the application of knowledge •Examples of professional development offerings and plans tied specifically to the approved or prescribed instructional strategies and programs •Interviews •Accreditation Report •Observations	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 •Peer or mentoring opportunities and interactions •Recognition of teachers with regard to these practices •Examples of improvements to instructional practices resulting from the evaluation process •Interviews •Observations •Professional development offerings and plans tied to the prescribed education program, instructional strategies, developmentally appropriate practices, and student success	4

3.5	The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.	•Observations •Common language, protocols and reporting tools •Calendar/schedule of learning community meetings •Professional development funding to promote professional learning communities •Interviews •Evidence of informal conversations that reflect collaboration about student learning •Examples of improvements to content and instructional practice resulting from collaboration •Accreditation Report •Master Schedules Organizational Conditions	4
3.6	Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning.	•Observations •Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance •Survey results •Examples of assessments that prompted modification in instruction •Interviews •Accreditation Report	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 •Survey results •Descriptions and schedules of mentoring, coaching, and induction programs with references to district and school beliefs and values about teaching and learning •Records of meetings and informal feedback sessions •Observations •Interviews •Professional learning calendar with activities for instructional support of new staff •Personnel manuals with information related to new hires including mentoring, coaching, and induction practices	4

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.	•Performance-based report cards •Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance •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 •Parental/family/caregiver involvement plan including activities, timeframes, and evaluation process •Interviews	3
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.	•Curriculum and activities of structures for adults advocating on behalf of students •Accreditation Report •Description of formalized structures for adults to advocate on behalf of students •Interviews •Master schedule with time for formalized structure •School Culture gave evidence but the structure is not evaluated and intentional at this point.	4

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.	•Interviews •Evaluation process for grading and reporting practices •Survey results •Sample communications to stakeholders about grading and reporting •Accreditation Report •Sample report cards for each program or grade level and for all courses and programs •Policies, processes, and procedures on grading and reporting •Standards Based Report Cards	4
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	•Evaluation tools for professional learning •Survey results •District quality control procedures showing implementation plan for professional development for district and school staff •District professional development plan involving the district and all schools •Brief explanation of alignment between professional learning and identified needs •Accreditation Report •Observations •Interviews	3

| 3.12 | The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students. | •Schedules, lesson plans, or example student learning plans showing the implementation of learning support services

•Survey results

•List of learning support services and student population served by such services

•Interviews

•Accreditation Report

•Observations

•Training and professional learning related to research on unique characteristics of learning

•Data used to identify unique learning needs of students

•School Mission and Purpose | 4 |

Powerful Practices   *Indicator*

1. A well-defined curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences for all students with clearly defined learning targets communicated to students and parents.   3.1

    The External Review Team identified various indicators of equitable and challenging learning experiences when conducting classroom observations. Instruction is strongly gauged by curriculum maps and learning targets that are monitored and measured regularly. Every child is important in the achievement efforts of the instructional staff. Students are discussed in Professional Learning Committee (PLCs) meetings where decisions are made to further assist or challenge each student as indicated by data. An expanded support system is provided through community agency partnerships that include tutors who assist students during the school day and after school.

    Equity exists throughout the schools. It is evident in multiple layers of support within the classrooms: teacher assistants, English Language Learner (ELL) teachers, Reading and Math Coaches, and Special Education Inclusion teachers. From data analysis, instructional methods are differentiated including small group instruction. The newly incorporated Design Teams are another mechanism for identifying needs and providing support. It was evident at each school that school leadership takes an active role in knowing children and the data that support their individual needs. This engagement includes working collaboratively with data coaches and monitoring progress. Scheduling is a major part of meeting individual needs. In addition to the regular school calendar, the district provides year-round schooling in one of its schools to address the needs of its population.

    Creating and communicating specific learning goals to students and parents is a vital part of the overall student achievement process in FSSD schools. While considerable attention is given to monitoring and adjusting instructional strategies for students in specific sub-groups, the success of all learners is the central focus. Gifted and talented students, high and average achievers, at-risk learners, and English Language Learner students are provided individualized instruction and diversity in programs. Each school has an on-site Gifted and Talented teacher and well-established music, art, theater, and physical education programs to serve all students.

    When curriculum includes diversity of programs, differentiated instruction, and equity for all learners, a district is positioned for sustainable continuous improvement.

2. The system utilizes a comprehensive assessment plan to monitor, adjust, and check for alignment of the curriculum, instruction, and student achievement maintaining a clear focus on teaching and learning.
3.2

The examination of artifacts provided evidence of the district's comprehensive assessment plan. There is a common assessment calendar that defines when data will be collected and the multiple forms of assessments that are included in checking for learning. Reading and Math Coaches collect and analyze assessment data which are then discussed in PLC meetings with teachers and other support personnel. In those meetings, specific grade level and subject level planning occurs. Additionally, there is time in school schedules for vertical and horizontal articulation as well as reinforcement of instruction for Tier 2 and Tier 3 strategies. Team members experienced the depth of collection and monitoring as evidenced in the data walls at each school site.

School administrators are involved with the use of data in adjusting instructional practices and the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and achievement within their schools. It is not a duty that is passed on to others. Administrators are active participants in the monitoring process and the personal attention that each child receives. They work collaboratively with the instructional staff and coaches to reach student and school goals. The collaboration among all stakeholders within the schools has led to specific distinctions such as one school being named a Tennessee Reward School. This school's award had double merit: it was in the top five percent of Tennessee schools for annual growth and top five percent for academic achievement in state tests.

The inclusion of all instructional and administrative staff in the process of systemically monitoring and adjusting instructional practices based on the analysis of student achievement data and performance evaluation data leads to district-wide academic excellence.

3. Multiple layers of support are provided by the system to build capacity through differentiated professional development, to foster leadership development, and to align supervision and organizational structures.

3.4

Expectations for teacher performance are aligned with district beliefs about teaching and learning. Teachers must follow the approved curriculum and apply data to the intervention level of all students. In order to ensure these practices are implemented with fidelity, supervision and evaluation protocols are systemically followed with dialogues that provide for improvement of instructional practices resulting from the evaluations at each school.   Evaluations are conducted through paired observations by Central Office administrators and building level principals. When instructional assistance is indicated, Central Office personnel provide support, monitor the progress, and follow-up with teachers to build capacity and confidence. Teachers expressed to team members their appreciation for this level of care and concern for their professional well-being.

District leadership has provided a paced curriculum to ensure systemic implementation. They have created an intentional redesign of district professional development linked to the district's prescribed educational programs and expectations for student success. Prior to the implementation of this procedure, professional development had only a school focus. Now a district professional development component is part of the professional offerings for individual growth.

In the Franklin tradition of celebrating success, the Board of Education and Director of Schools honor teachers during the year for their dedication and accomplishments. While system-wide recognition honors individual excellence, it also builds teacher and leadership capacity.   It is further evidence that FSSD believes all are learners and all learners are leaders.

Excellence in teaching that is focused on student success is a formula for educational attainment.

4. The district is clearly a professional learning organization that supports improved instruction and ensures student learning at all levels.   3.5
    The visionary, collaborative, shared leadership philosophy of the Director of Schools has established that all personnel and students are learners and all learners will succeed. He also views status-quo as equal to regression. These beliefs have defined the culture of Franklin Special School District as a community of caring individuals dedicated to student success. The collaborative development of the District Strategic Plan and the newly implemented Rezoning for School Equity Plan are examples of district leadership and Board of Education commitment to educational excellence for all students. Stakeholder interviews further supported this as a reality across the district. Community partners working within the schools provide instructional support in addition to traditional financial support. Needs of the students and their families determine the types of support community partners provide.

    Within each school site, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) work collaboratively to plan and implement the best practices for grade level and subject level learning for each child. It is in this structure that achievement data are analyzed and instructional decisions are reached to enhance and improve learning. School administrators and Central Office staff provide additional support to maximize teaching efforts in reaching district goals and the desired level of excellence for each Franklin student.

    FSSD's collaborative culture has grown to include a new Design Team, Principal meetings, Advisory Team meetings with the Director of Schools, peer coaching, and school site guidance from Reading and Math coaches. Teachers remarked that they are proud to be a part of FSSD and are grateful for the professional growth they have experienced.

    Participation that includes all stakeholders in examining organizational practices, followed by collaborative feedback regarding steps for improvement, creates a culture for excellence and continuous improvement that impacts all learners.

5. An exemplary mentoring, coaching, and induction program supports instructional   3.7
    improvement consistent with the system's mission and purpose.
    FSSD has developed a New Teacher Induction Program that begins with three days of orientation, followed by mentoring from state-trained educators within the system. First year teachers each have two mentors and the program continues according to the mentoring protocol of the plan for teachers with six years or less of experience. The program, which is designed for teachers who are new to teaching and those who are experienced but new to FSSD, is funded by the Board of Education as a professional learning item.

    To facilitate the induction and coaching process, FSSD provides a professional learning calendar listing activities, descriptions, and schedules of mentoring sessions for the year. Mentoring includes observing and modeling within classrooms. This program is based on Coaching for Results Training.

    Interviewees indicated the effectiveness of the district mentoring program and the on-going support they receive from school leaders and fellow teachers as well as the continuous support of the Central Office staff. While this program is intentionally designed to help teachers be successful instructors, it is another example of the care and investment that the district places in its human resources.

    Financial and human resources that are designated to new teacher induction and mentoring programs that support district vision and purpose are funds well spent. Teachers, students, and the district reap the rewards of excellence.

6. The FSSD culture creates environments where all students are known by at least one or more adult advocates in support of each school's mission to achieve excellence for all.

   3.9

   The External Review Team learned from review of artifacts and personal testimonies in interviews that FSSD is a very caring community. One stakeholder with over thirty years of district experience commented that individual care for each and every student is not new, rather it has always been a part of the culture and a district expectation. Parents added that Board of Education members actually ask about children by name. Throughout the buildings the team found evidence of this culture of care and kindness. It became a theme of "Doing business the Franklin way" as the team continued to find evidence of the personal attention given to every child. Rather than a specific plan on paper, this one-on-one adult advocacy concept was in full operation and embedded in the daily functions at each school.

   FSSD shows its commitment to children in academic accountability by providing the best trained educators that can be found. These teachers and administrators carefully examine the learning needs of each student, collaborate, and develop specific learning goals that are monitored and adjusted as needed. Within the school schedule, time is allowed for small group targeted instructional support with additional adults teaching, tutoring, and encouraging the children assigned to them. After-school academic assistance is offered using community volunteers who take an active role with specific students. FSSD adds another layer of support by providing busing for the after-school tutoring program. One school has been designated as a year-round school to further control any regression of skills.

   The human needs of each child are a continuing consideration of district personnel. Guidance counselors and nurses provide mental, emotional, and health services for students and their families. The district provides an exemplary summer food program where buses are sent out with food throughout the summer for needy families. Stakeholders commented that it is not uncommon to see the Director of Schools and district personnel actively involved in this nutrition program. Community partners from Costco and local health agencies provide health information, assist in immunization efforts, and provide personal support in the form of in-school tutoring, reading assistance, and transportation. A special Christmas program was instituted several years ago to include the adoption of needy school families who receive a Christmas tree and gifts for family members. Stakeholders verified that the district continuously checks for the needs of its population and finds the support within the community. "If the need exists, the district will address it," several stakeholders remarked.

   Home, school, and society needs create a human mandate for entire communities to be the source of success for students today. Districts that can elicit that level of involvement will maximize the outcomes for their students.

7. District-wide grading and reporting practices are regularly evaluated to reflect clear learning targets and inform students and parents of academic progress. Accountability in grading practices has its foundation in policies created and reviewed annually by the FSSD Board of Education (BOE). District-wide processes and procedures are established and systemically implemented at each school. These measures are included in Student Handbooks that are distributed at the beginning of each school year to inform parents. Through a collaborative process, teachers determine instructional plans that support the required curriculum standards and appropriate evaluations that measure academic progress. Learning progress is reported quarterly to parents using a standards-based report card in Grades K-4. Detailed descriptions are included in the reporting process as well as in parent conferences and mid-quarterly reports. Grading practices for Grades 5-8 are based on a standard grading scale established by the BOE. Additionally, parents of students in Grades 5-8 can access grading readily using the district's online Parent Portal.

    The External Review Team gathered evidence in support of this Powerful Practice through teacher and parent interviews and from data provided in curriculum pacing guides, classroom "I can" statements, and the extensive use of data walls and data conferencing artifacts.

    Establishing baselines in academic skill levels is essential to measuring growth. From this point, growth becomes highly promoted by accurate and timely reporting to students and parents as a means of reaching academic targets.

3.10

8. Community participation and support agencies enhance the district's ability to provide for the needs of all students.   3.12

    The External Review Team observed that FSSD provides multiple means of support to its students. There is a strong commitment to working collaboratively within each school and across the district to provide programs for every child. District leadership encourages community participation in the schools and welcomes all support agencies focused on meeting the needs of each student. In validation of this, community stakeholders shared their perspectives in stating that the Director of Schools is visible and intentionally builds community relationships for the sake of the children. One specific example of this is a partnership that exists with a local energy corporation that provides learning opportunities for Grade 6 Science students to engage in basic electricity projects and learn the importance of conservation of power resources.

    Clear evidence of the impact of some community partnerships was noted at one school where students solved an erosion problem they had discovered. Their solution (as noted on the FSSD website) was the creation of a "rain garden" that "would capture clean rainwater from the roof, driveway, and sidewalks and divert it into a garden where it can slowly soak into the ground. This garden has the extra benefit of filtering contaminants and keeping quantities of clean water from going down the sewer system." The rain garden project was funded with money the school received earlier this year from Tennessee's first Sustainability Steward Award, a component of the Good Sports Always Recycle program sponsored by Eastman Chemical Company, Food City, Waste Connections of TN, Inc., and the University of Tennessee.

    FSSD is to be commended for its extensive use of outside resources that directly impact district learning goals. Collaborative relationships such as these afford cost-effective ways of filling gaps in services, which is particularly important in times of increasing need and shrinking funding resources.

    Within FSSD, school and district personnel provide services from enrichment to remediation. The systematic and continuous use of data enables district educators to align learning goals with individual student needs. Interventions such as increased time within the school day, small group instruction, additional instructional staff, and services for gifted and talented students through the expansive arts programs delivered by the Special Education Gifted and Talented teachers, all human resources become focused on the specific needs of each child. Teachers and administrators continue to become knowledgeable about how students learn so that strategies and resources can be optimized for student success.

    School districts that seek and welcome community support in the form of financial and human resources accomplish district expectations for student success, build a sense of ownership among community stakeholders, and optimize program offerings beyond the constraints of dwindling federal, state, and local funding.

Opportunities for Improvement   *Indicator*

1. Establish a comprehensive and all-inclusive program of continuous professional learning, assessing needs, and building capacity of all professional and support staff.   3.11
The External Review Team learned from artifact review and interviews that FSSD has implemented a sound professional learning plan for its teaching personnel. However, those same information sources, coupled with classroom observations, revealed a need for additional training in an ever-changing educational arena. Survey results and interview data indicated that district and school training needs to include the para-professionals, mainly how they can support student achievement in the services they provide.

   The existing training has focused on instructional strategies and basic data analysis which position the district to modulate to the next level in those areas. Students have received quality instruction as evidenced in exemplary district achievement data.   However, with the implementation of Common Core State Standards in coming years, additional training will be valuable to align instructional delivery and planning of activities to avoid any regression in student achievement.

   To determine future professional development on-going needs assessments can be used to guide and prioritize the training. This measure, along with performance evaluation data, can provide a picture of district-wide needs. Subsequent steps can include the decisions of how to provide the training and evaluating on a regular basis what has been learned from professional development opportunities with regard to its impact on teacher growth and student success. District and school level monitoring and support can propel the outcomes of these efforts.

   An exemplary, proactive program of professional development for all, intentionally designed to target system, school, and individual needs and evaluated for its effectiveness in improving student learning can enable Franklin Special School District to achieve continued excellence.

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.

Standard	Standard Performance Level

The system has resources and provides services in all schools that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.		3.25
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.1	The system engages in a systematic process to recruit, employ, and retain a sufficient number of qualified professional and support staff to fulfill their roles and responsibilities and support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, and educational programs.	•Accreditation Report •Survey results •District budgets or financial plans for the last three years •District quality assurance procedures for monitoring qualified staff across all schools •School budgets or financial plans for last three years •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	4
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.	•Examples of school schedules •District quality assurance procedures showing district oversight of schools pertaining to school resources •Accreditation Report •Examples of efforts of school leaders to secure necessary material and fiscal resources •Survey results •Examples of school calendars •Interviews •Alignment of school budgets with school purpose and direction •Alignment of district budget with district purpose and direction •District strategic plan showing resources support for district	4

4.3	The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	•District quality control procedures showing the monitoring of compliance with district expectations for school facilities and learning environments •Interviews •Observations •Accreditation Report •Example systems for school maintenance requests •Survey results •Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements •Policies, handbooks on district and school facilities and learning environments	4
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 •District quality control procedures showing the monitoring of compliance with district expectations for school facilities, learning environments •Evaluation results of the effectiveness of the district strategic plan or indicators of changes resulting in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategic plan •Survey results •Interviews •Policies, handbooks on district and school facilities and learning environments •Accreditation Report	3
4.5	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system.	•Observations •Interviews •Accreditation Report •District education delivery model intended for school implementation including media and information resources to support the education program •Data on media and information resources available to students and staff	2

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 •District quality control procedures that monitor the effectiveness of technology services at the district-level and school-level •Assessments to inform development of district and school technology plans •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 •Observations	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 •Agreements with school community agencies for student-family support •Accreditation Report •Schedule of family services, e.g., parent classes, survival skills •Social classes and services, e.g., bullying, character education •List of support services available to students	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 •Survey results •Accreditation Report •Description of IEP process •District quality assurance procedures that monitor program effectiveness of student support services •Interviews •Description of referral process	3

Powerful Practices   *Indicator*

1.   FSSD conducts a systematic process to recruit, employ, and retain a highly   4.1
     qualified and diverse staff.
     FSSD's commitment to its vision statement "Excellence in Teaching and Learning
     for All" is supported by the district's active pursuit of the highest quality teachers
     available. While Human Resources has extensive application files for teaching
     positions, district personnel intentionally seek the best of the best by attending job
     fairs and engaging in active recruitment. Job information is made available on the
     FSSD website also. Presently FSSD has a teaching staff with 34 percent of the
     teachers having a BA degree and 66 percent having a Master's degree or higher.
     In addition, the district seeks diversity in its recruitment of teachers and specialists
     to provide instruction in the arts and other specific areas.

     Human Resources provides a five year Beginning and New Teacher Induction
     Program (BANTIP) for all teachers new to FSSD. Annual hiring needs are
     determined from the results of the Projected Student and Staffing Planning Form
     to ensure that adequate hiring will fulfill the district's purpose and direction for
     excellence. Central Office staff and the Board of Education work collaboratively to
     provide funding for the desired hiring needs of the district.

     A theme that developed throughout the visit is the focus on people by FSSD
     leadership. This priority was evident in the recruiting, hiring, and retention of high
     quality personnel. Salaries and benefits rank among the highest in the state as
     further evidence of the district's value of its human resources.

     High performing teachers and administrators are the hallmark of successful school
     districts; proactive recruiting, mentoring, retaining, and honoring high quality,
     caring professionals leads to stability and excellence in schools and districts.

2. The district manages instructional time, fiscal resources, and material resources to fully support the vision of the district.   4.2
    The External Review Team examined artifacts that supported the systemic effort by FSSD to protect instructional time involving a thorough and complex means of scheduling, specifically to address its belief in educating the whole child. Schedules are reconfigured at school sites to accommodate instructional time for interventions within the daily schedule. Assessment schedules are also developed for systemic coordination.

    Interviews with the Board of Education (BOE) verified that the budgeting process and the district purpose and direction are intentionally aligned as decisions are reached. The same was true throughout the planning and writing of the five year District Strategic Plan. Furthermore, the BOE ensures opportunities for "all learners" by providing funding for professional development of its people. Stakeholders are informed of these policies and practices through BOE minutes and school handbooks.

    Instructional resources were observed in classroom visitations. The district has acquired teaching tools and technology resources that support the purpose and direction of the district and provide equitable opportunities to attain the challenging learning expectations of the district vision of Excellence in Teaching and Learning for All.

    While instructional practices must be the core of what happens at a successful school, the supporting arms are time, financial resources, and materials. Effective districts examine ways to manage those arms of support in spite of prevailing obstacles.

3. District staff takes pride in proactively maintaining a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all stakeholders.   4.3
    District personnel developed specific definitions and expectations for maintaining a safe, clean, and healthy environment. All stakeholders share a role in meeting these expectations. Again, this level of excellence is a part of the Franklin culture. School buildings are shining examples of a cheerful and comfortable, encouraging and supportive learning climate where students are set up for success. Daily operations include conservation efforts, the safety of all stakeholders, and an inviting and welcoming place to all visitors. There is an internal pride for beauty inside and outside at each school. Some buildings have sections that were original structures that have been expanded to meet growing needs of the school community. Moving from old areas into new ones is a seamless transition because quality has been the determiner for maintaining each campus to a high level.

    Safety procedures, school and district crisis plans, and the installation and monitoring of security cameras add personal assurance for parents to feel their children are protected. Maintenance schedules were reviewed and it was noted that FSSD has an effective process in place for informing district maintenance personnel of needed work. Minutes and meeting logs supported that training was an integral part of the security within the district. Examination of safety and health inspection data verified that all levels of compliance are routinely met in FSSD.

    Research continues to connect safe and inviting school environments with an increase in student motivation and performance.

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.

Standard	Standard Performance Level
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.	2.8

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level

5.1	The system establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	•Brief description of technology or web-based platforms that support the education delivery model •Documentation or description of evaluation tools/protocols •Survey results •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 •Assessment Flow Chart Director of School's Presentation	3
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.	•Accreditation Report •District quality control procedures that monitor schools in effectively using data to improve instruction and student learning •List of data sources related to district effectiveness •Survey results •Examples of use of data to design, implement, and evaluate continuous improvement plans and apply learning •Interviews •List of data sources related to student learning, instruction, program effectiveness, and conditions that support learning •Data Walls Pacing Guides Gap Closure Reports	3

5.3	Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.	•Accreditation Report •Professional learning schedule specific to the use of data •Documentation of attendance and training related to data use •Survey results	2
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 •Data Walls School Report Cards	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 •Survey results •Sample communications to stakeholders regarding student learning, conditions that support learning, and achievement of school improvement goals •District quality control procedures for monitoring information about student learning, systems that support learning, and the achievement of school improvement goals •Examples of district marketing tools and websites that cite student achievement results or that make promises regarding student achievement •Executive summaries of student learning reports to stakeholder groups •School Climate Surveys	3

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 (ELEOT)

Environments	*Level*
A. Equitable Learning Environment:	3.1
B. High Expectations Environment:	3.12
C. Supportive Learning Environment:	3.44
D. Active Learning Environment:	3.29
E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment:	3.11
F. Well-Managed Learning Environment:	3.42
G. Digital Learning Environment	1.72

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.

The five member External Review Team, composed of three in-state and two out-of-state educators, participated in the Franklin Special School District (FSSD) System Accreditation Review. The team conducted the accreditation renewal review from Sunday, April 7, 2013 through Wednesday, April 10, 2013. Prior to the visit, district coordinators attended AdvancED training and conducted all necessary requirements in preparation for the team visit. The Team Coordinators and Lead Evaluator shared many emails and telephone calls in order to create the optimal opportunity to capture all aspects of the district, including a design that enabled team members to visit all eight schools. The team schedule was adjusted to optimize the amount of classroom observation time.

The team interviewed 29 district and building administrators, 63 teachers, 38 parents and community representatives, 5 Board of Education members, and 96 students for a total of 231 stakeholders. The district provided all necessary components including a combination of digital and hardcopy artifacts for team review. Presentations, interviews, and school visits completed the evidential process.

FSSD was well-prepared for the accreditation visit and representative of its transparent and caring way of conducting its vision - Excellence in Teaching and Learning for All.

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.

As the External Review Team conducted interviews and reviewed artifacts, discussions began to focus on emerging themes that were coming forth as indicators of the Franklin culture: 1) intentionality of practices that consistently put children first; 2) people are perceived as the strength of the district; 3) leadership, educators, and students were all passionate learners; 4) parents proudly acknowledged "My child is a part of FSSD"; 5) there is no compromise on instruction; and 6) FSSD is led by totally exemplary leaders.

The External Review Team's standards diagnostic rating for Franklin Special School District ranged from 2.8 in Using Results for Continuous Improvement to 3.83 in Governance and Leadership. These final commendable ratings for the five standards were indicative of the dedication of the entire educational community. The highest rating in Governance and Leadership mirrored the district's philosophy, as reflected in the reversed organizational chart, that the Board of Education must be the strong foundation by which all areas are supported. Cohesive governance, strong district leadership, and consistent alignment of decisions with the district's purpose and direction were profoundly validated by stakeholders and documentation.

Standard 1, Purpose and Direction, was embedded in the four other standards. Within each school, it was evident that all were working for the same cause - excellent educational experiences for all students. As voiced by stakeholders, in FSSD, if there is a need, it will be addressed. An example of this commitment is the Seamless Summer Options Food Program which is in its third year of partnership with the USDA to provide breakfast and lunch to needy children in the district. Summer 2012, district employees including the Director of Schools and school employees went into the needy community neighborhoods and served over 10,000 breakfast meals and 25,850 lunch meals.

The five district goals and the ten district beliefs were found to be prevalent throughout the school community. These were strongly visible in supportive, visionary district leadership, strong school leadership, dedicated caring teachers and support staff, and engaged parents and business partners. This is a district that has complete commitment to the whole child as exemplified in the diverse programs available for all students and a personalized relationship with each child.

FSSD has received an impressive list of distinctions from the FSSD School Board being a three-time winner as A Tennessee Board of Distinction to the district receiving Tennessee Exemplary District Recognition for overall achievement and progress in closing achievement gaps in sub-groups. Three Focus Schools are laser-focused on closing specific achievements gaps as evidenced by progress monitoring data that are examined daily. Moore Elementary was named a Tennessee Reward School for being in the top 5 percent in the state for annual growth and top 5 percent for academic achievement on state tests. Moore was one of 40 schools to be recognized in both categories.

An amazing student-initiated Rain Garden Project was found at Franklin Intermediate School. This conservation effort was sponsored by local, state, and national agencies. It is an example of how FSSD seeks opportunities to extend the learning experience for students through partnerships with agencies and organizations in the community and beyond. District commitment to environmental sustainability has resulted in FSSD receiving national recognition for its Energy Education program which resulted in approximately $700,000 in energy savings. The district also received national recognition as a Top Performer by ENERGY STAR.

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.

The External Review Team divided in order to visit all eight FSSD schools as part of the evidential process.   Team members validated that what FSSD professed to offer was evident, including the multi-layers of support and interventions described in the Accreditation Report. Using the AdvancED Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (ELEOT), the team gathered data from 41 classroom observations rating the seven environments of ELEOT.   Using a scale of 1 to 4, the diagnostic ratings for the first six environments (Equitable Learning, High Expectations, Supportive Learning, Active learning, Progress Monitoring and Feedback, and Well-Managed Learning Environment) ranged from 3.10 to 3.42.

The seventh area, Digital Learning Environment, scored a 1.72 on a four point scale.

In analyzing the outlier score in Digital Learning Environment, specific factors impacted that rating. In recent times, FSSD lost its Instructional Technology Integration Specialist, which has resulted in teachers not receiving training in how to effectively use technology in lessons and student engagement. The district has recognized that it must plan to adequately fund technology procurement, training, and replacement. Schools currently conduct fundraisers to assist in these area of technology. The three Focus Schools and some other schools have recently obtained new technology equipment but the training has been limited and the longer process of guiding teachers in the effective integration of technology has not been adequate to establish consistency in its use by teachers or children in building achievement capacity. Teacher training in using various digital equipment will increase confidence, as will peer coaching and mentoring within the schools. Integrating technology as an instructional tool can be a collaborative endeavor within the PLCs at each school. Finally, the use of technology needs to transfer to students using digital learning resources effectively in preparation for high school, college, and career expectations in the global society.

The External Review Team assigned to FSSD faced a unique challenge. This can best be described as a two-prong mission: 1) observe and validate the outstanding practices that are currently in place and are working well; 2) determine any specific focus that will guide FSSD in its future quest to sustain its high levels of excellence. Exemplary districts command a customized approach to maintaining excellence compared to districts that are striving for excellence and need direction on how to continue that journey.

FSSD has held exemplary status in achievement and is dedicated to sustaining that level in the future. Specifically, the External Review Team noted a need for additional training resulting in a Required Action (5.3) in Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement. Survey results, interviews, and the District Accreditation Report supported a continuing need for all personnel to understand how to analyze data and use it effectively. This is a particular need for district paraprofessionals who serve as teaching assistants and are involved in student support. As new mandates and initiatives impact school districts, it is essential for districts to strengthen their staffs through on-going professional development that is aligned with the needs of the individuals and the high district expectations for success for all students. Of equal importance will be the need to address digital learning as described in the Required Action (4.5) for Standard 4 - Resources and Support Systems.

Therefore, team deliberations resulted in identifying and advocating that FSSD's human and creative financial resources can best be allocated in the area of Continuous Improvement. Under that umbrella are two domains that the team believes will ensure continued and sustained progress: 1) technology expansion and 2) on-going professional development for all employees to include accelerated use of technology and continued use of data in meeting individual student needs. The district's charge will be to collaboratively orchestrate the steps in those two domains that will augment current practices, intensify training and implementation of digital learning, and fortify strategic procedures that will result in a strong Continuous Improvement component in the district. Given the long history of excellence in Franklin Special School District, the pursuit of these collaborative efforts will exceed all district expectations.

The External Review Team appreciates the hospitality and professional attitude towards continuous improvement and accreditation demonstrated by all stakeholders. Special gratitude is extended to the district leadership and staff who made the planning for this visit a seamless endeavor. It was a memorable event for the External Review Team to experience true excellence. The team has completed the comprehensive review of artifacts, interviews, and observations and will communicate those findings to AdvancED. The final written report will be sent to the district in approximately one month and final accreditation determination will be issued in June 2013 by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission. The team congratulates the district in its commendable accomplishments.

On a previous accreditation visit, the 2007 External Review Team described the FSSD as "an exemplary school system led by an extraordinary professional staff, highly committed and knowledgeable board of education, educated and involved parents, and an extremely supportive community that collectively encourage and support student success at all levels of the system. It is evident throughout the system that instructional improvement that results in improving student achievement is the highest priority."

The 2013 External Review Team profoundly concurs.

Required Actions

1. Identify qualified personnel to assist students and staff in determining the informational resources and tools necessary to support the system's educational programs, to systematically integrate instructional technology resources into daily classroom instruction, to optimize student opportunities to use these resources for learning, and to continuously monitor their effectiveness on student achievement.

   Primary Indicator or Assurance: 4.5

Franklin Special School District has acquired some technology resources and provided some training in the use of the existing resources. However, classroom observations provided limited evidence of the systematic, systemic use of existing technology for instructional purposes.

In the recent past, FSSD had an instructional technology integration strategist who was responsible for training teachers in
effective integration of technology as an instructional tool. That person left the district in the past year and the position has not been filled. Therefore, the teachers have had limited mentoring or training in this area of integration and because of their uncertainty of how to use technology as a teaching tool, some have been apprehensive about using it on a regular basis.

Currently, the district has limited financial allocations for purchasing and replacing technology. The same is true for ongoing technology training for teachers. The three Focus Schools have used their additional funding to address the use of technology in those schools, but the effort has been very recent and is a work-in-progress. At this time, schools are attempting to fund technology with school-based fundraisers which present limitations on the procurement of technology.

When the External Review Team visited classrooms and rated student performance using the Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (ELEOT), district ratings in six of the seven environments ranged from 3.10 to 3.44 on a scale of one to four. However, the district rating for the seventh environment, Digital Learning Environment, was 1.72, indicating a need for alignment with the other six environments.

Within each school and across the district, teachers have varying degrees of training, expertise, and confidence in the use of technology. Those teachers who are more proficient and confident can be catalysts for improvement if they participate in peer training. Integration of technology in lessons and student activities can be an additional focus in PLC meetings where teachers collaborate and make decisions regarding instructional delivery and best strategies for meeting student learning goals. There is also the opportunity at each school for peer modeling of how to use technology within a lesson.

The technology integration that the External Review Team observed was centered on the teacher using technology such as teacher-directed integration using the Promethean Board. While that level of integration was an effective tool for instructional delivery, it generally did not enhance student engagement which is one of the ultimate goals. In one classroom where the school owned a set of Classroom Response System Clickers, the teacher was introducing the clickers for the first time to her class. Students actually used the clickers for a few responses on the Promethean Board before the period ended. It is uncertain what the next step will be for that teacher, those students, or other students.

Researching the value of using clickers, for example, as an instructional tool leads to an awareness of the power of this piece of technology to support the incorporation of recall questions, conceptual understanding and application questions, critical thinking exercises that can become group discussions, summative and formative assessment, and peer instruction opportunities. This tool can help teachers to identify misconceptions and what skills need additional focus. It is also an avenue that provides a safe space for shy, uncertain students to respond. This form of district and school-based deliberation, awareness, and training can be highly supportive of sustaining the desired high learner expectations of FSSD. As instructional technology transitions to higher levels across the district, leadership can begin to monitor and evaluate the effective and systematic use of integrated technology in relation to its impact on student achievement. The technology preparedness of FSSD students to transition into high

school and the levels of readiness in 21st century workplace skills are other areas for consideration.

Digital inquiry and instruction are integral components of student preparedness for technical, college, and career opportunities in the global society.

2. Provide additional training to teachers and support staff in the interpretation and use of data to inform instruction.

   Primary Indicator or Assurance: 5.3

Franklin Special School District recognizes the importance of data as a strong indicator of both performance and needs for improvement in determining instructional practices. The district has incorporated surveys and achievement data to assess district success in reaching desired student outcomes. Data mining workshops and feedback have contributed to district efforts to focus on analyzing and using data for instructional decisions.

As part of the evidential process, the External Review Team held stakeholder interviews and examined Excel training documentation, the FSSD accreditation report, and survey results. While it is evident that some training has occurred and teachers are delving into student data, collaborating on instructional strategies that impact individual student achievement, and writing interventions for specific goals, several areas are worthy of further development.

Major professional development activities focused on gathering and analyzing data have provided teachers with a foundational understanding of why data need to be used in instructional decisions. This process of using data to select instructional strategies has been implemented and is positioned to be more strongly linked to the continuous improvement process. The disparity noted by the External Review Team from interviews and artifact reviews is that most data training has focused on the professional teaching staff. Considering that paraprofessional teaching assistants are involved in small group interventions, tutoring, and instructional development of learning skills, it is essential that they receive data training that will translate into a clear awareness of the importance of data, how to appropriately support the instructional needs of the students they serve, and have training in how to effectively reach desired goals, e.g., an understanding of how students learn, different learning styles, etc. Their services will impact future data. Training, monitoring, and evaluating their professional development will be an additional strata in the total continuous improvement design.

As new mandates are implemented, core training of all personnel will have an urgency such as the expectations for Response to Instruction, Common Core State Standards, online testing to name some current educational topics. While FSSD has been an exemplary school district, the emphasis in Standard 5 (Using Results for Continuous Improvement) requires that systemic, systematic, sustainable practices for future continuous improvement be intensified, including all stakeholders, to ensure success for all students as new initiatives, challenges, and opportunities arise.

Continuous improvement is a multi-faceted, multi-layer concept that is inclusive of all entities who impact student success, including the Board of Education, district leaders, school leaders, and all personnel who engage in instructional support. This form of inclusive student support will be the assurance of educational excellence that has always been and always will be the mission of Franklin Special School District.

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.