AdvancED 2013: External Review Report Summary

1. **Overall Rating – Accredited**
   a. Accredited is the highest accreditation rating that can be earned in 2013
   b. Possible Levels of Accreditation
       i. Accredited (or Accredited Outright)
       ii. Accredited on Advisement
       iii. Accredited Warned
       iv. Accredited Probation
2. New Banner will be received on September 13 at the Fall Conference

<u>Standards</u>
1. Purpose and Direction
2. Governance and Leadership
3. Teaching and Assessing for Learning
4. Resources and Support Systems
5. Using Results for Continuous Improvement

<u>Powerful Practices (4)</u>
1. **Strong pride in the district and its commitment to educating all children go above and beyond standard expectations for providing a positive, achievement-focused educational environment.**

    A strong focus is at the core of every educational agency. The district is highly committed to shared values that focus on learning and educational experiences. Evident at the district and school levels, there is a concentration on achievement and accountability among all leadership as well as identified, communicated, and measured goals for student success, and evidence of Learning-Focused initiatives at the classroom level.

    From Indicator 1. 3
    The school leadership and staff at all levels of the system commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning and supports challenging, equitable educational programs and learning experiences for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills.

2. **The Board of Trustees and district leadership have forged a remarkably cohesive relationship and have demonstrated a commitment to student success and effective operations of the school system that is recognized and appreciated by all stakeholders.**

    The board of trustees operates as a respectful, humble governing body that is committed to collaboration with district and school leadership. Through interviews with board members, the superintendent, district and school staff and students, it was clearly demonstrated that there is a true commitment to providing the resources and support structures needed to assure student success. There is a strong sense of mutual respect, trust, and professionalism that exists between the board of trustees and district leadership. Surveys conducted with the stakeholders, administration, school staff, and students indicate a strong supportive bond between and among district employees, leadership, and governing body.

    From Indicator 2.2
    The governing body operates responsibility and functions effectively.

3. **The district has implemented an outstanding comprehensive strategic planning process, resulting in a model Strategic Plan.**

   To ensure the autonomy needed to meet the goals for achievement and instruction and management of day-to-day operations, the district has implemented an outstanding strategic planning process that has resulted in a model strategic plan. The process involved community members, business partners, district administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents. The result was a set of umbrella goals and numerous interim performance goals that are both relevant and achievable. Each interim goal was then expanded to include strategies, actions/activities, timelines, person responsible, estimate of cost, funding source, and measures of success. Each school then followed the same process to develop their own plans. Through interviews with all stakeholder groups, it was exceedingly evident that the School Improvement Plans and professional development opportunities are derived from the strategic planning process.

   From Indicator 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-today operations

4. **The district has implemented an outstanding facilities and maintenance system in place that has provided the district with immaculate and safe school and office buildings.**

   There is in place a system for monitoring buildings, and evidence presented to the External Review Team indicated that maintenance requests received are addressed in a timely manner. Additionally, the team observed the presence of strict safety measures related to entering buildings. Both building entrances and classroom doors are kept locked. School resource officers are also present in the middle and high schools; others are shared between the elementary schools. Students were very vocal about feeling safe in school. Parents and staff readily echoed that sentiment. In today's atmosphere, it is more imperative than ever that schools are not just perceived as being safe, but are, in fact, very safe.

   From Indicator 4.3
   The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.

Opportunities for Improvement (Not Required – Suggestions)
1. **Re-visit and amend the district Professional Development Plan to include specific training for analyzing, disaggregating, interpreting, and using data to inform teaching strategies that will meet the needs of targeted individual students or groups of students who are currently not meeting school or district expectations.**

   The district has a well-developed Professional Development Plan for 2012-13 "guided by the District Strategic Plan, the school level professional development plans, summative and formative assessments, a yearly 'Professional Development Needs Assessment Survey',..." It was clear to the External Review Team from both the district and school-level Self Assessments that there is relatively low confidence in the staff's ability to effectively use the great amount of data available to them. This was also made clear to the team during interviews with district and school staff members. As complete as the District Professional Development Plan is, there is not a single session planned involving the use of data. As schools become immersed in the Common Core concepts, the need to accurately interpret and use data to assess student achievement will become even more critical. It is imperative that all staff members acquire a strong comfort level in this field. Goals 1 and 2 of the Strategic Plan and all of the Interim Performance Goals attached to those "Umbrella Goals" directly relate to understanding the use of data.

   From Indicator 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.

Required Actions
1. **Develop and implement an equitable, comprehensive K-12 instructional technology plan that ensures all students have the tools to pursue 21st Century learning objectives essential for the Common Core and for college and career readiness.**

   The External Review Team found the district to be seriously "behind the curve" with regard to classroom technology. Classrooms observed by the team generally had two desk top PCs, most appeared to have either a screen that could become interactive with a handheld tablet or had a whiteboard. All had mounted projectors. In the 36 classrooms observed, only one had students actively engaged with technology by using "clickers." In several classrooms, teachers were using their technology equipment to project questions, assignments, or to work out answers to math questions. Neither the infrastructure nor hardware was seen as sufficient to allow students to become proficient in the many applications available in today's digital arenas. While there is a technology plan that addresses equipment and infrastructure, the economy in the past few years has prevented the district from managing the goals and timelines included in the plan. There was no evidence of a plan that specifically addresses the instructional uses of technology. The district has recently employed a director of instructional technology who will begin in July. Until the district has a comprehensive instructional technology plan in place, it cannot move forward to meet 21st century learning objectives or the challenges of Common Core.

   From Indicator 4.6
   The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.

Notable Quotes from Report

1. The system was very open and honest in their self-assessment, clearly noting the areas of concern, and the evidence that supported that concern.
2. The team interviewed five members of the board of trustees, 44 school and district administrators, 61 teachers, 73 students, and 70 parents/community members, for a total of 253. Six schools were visited and 36 classrooms were observed using ELEOT (Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool.).
3. The board of trustees operates as a respectful, humble governing body that is committed to collaboration with district and school leadership.
4. The thoroughness of the district Strategic Plan as carefully developed by all stakeholders, accompanied by school strategic plans just as thoroughly developed, provides a strong thread that runs through each standard and every indicator. It was evident to the External Review Team that all actions taken by schools are directly aligned to the purpose and direction of the district.
5. The district leadership is very aware of the areas they must address to continue the successes being experienced by their students and to meet the challenges of the future.

Comparative Data

Standard	Spartanburg 5	South Carolina Average (13)
1	3.25	2.942
2	3.33	2.987
3	2.92	2.689
4	3.13	2.858
5	2.40	2.677