

Report of the External Review Team for Montessori Kids Academy

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Introduction

The External Review is an integral component of AdvancED Performance Accreditation and provides the institution with a comprehensive evaluation guided by the results of diagnostic instruments, in-depth review of data and documentation, and the professional judgment of a team of qualified and highly trained evaluators. A series of diagnostic instruments examines the impact of teaching and learning on student performance, the capacity of leadership to effect continuous improvement, and the degree to which the institution optimizes its use of available resources to facilitate and support student success. The results of this evaluation are represented in the Index of Education Quality (IEQ™) and through critical observations, namely, Powerful Practices, Opportunities for Improvement, and Improvement Priorities.

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 specific to their institution type, demonstrate acceptable levels of student performance and the continuous improvement of student performance, and provide evidence of stakeholder engagement and satisfaction. The power of AdvancED Performance Accreditation lies in the connections and linkages between and among the conditions, processes, and practices within a system that impact student performance and organizational effectiveness.

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 Standards were developed by a committee comprised of talented 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 define institutional quality and guide continuous improvement. Prior to implementation, an internationally recognized panel of experts in testing and measurement, teacher quality, and education research reviewed the standards and provided feedback, guidance and endorsement.

The AdvancED External Review Team uses AdvancED Standards, associated indicators and criteria related to student performance and stakeholder engagement to guide its evaluation. The Team examines adherence to standards as well as how the institution functions as a whole and embodies the practices and characteristics expected of an accredited institution. The Standards, indicators and related criteria are evaluated using indicator-specific performance levels. The Team rates each indicator and criterion on a scale of 1 to 4. The final scores assigned to the indicators and criteria represent the average of the External Review Team members' individual ratings.

The External Review is the hallmark of AdvancED Performance Accreditation. It energizes and equips the institution's leadership and stakeholders 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 the in-depth examination of evidence and relevant data, interviews with all stakeholder groups, and extensive observations of learning, instruction, and operations.

Use of Diagnostic Tools

A key to examining the institution is the design and use of diagnostic tools that reveal the effectiveness with which an institution creates conditions and implements processes and practices that impact student performance and success. In preparation for the External Review the institution conducted a Self Assessment that applied the standards and criteria for accreditation. The institution provided evidence to support its conclusions vis a vis organizational effectiveness in ensuring acceptable and improving levels of student performance.

- an indicator-based tool that connects the specific elements of the criteria to evidence gathered by the team;
- a student performance analytic that examines the quality of assessment instruments used by the institution, the integrity of the administration of the assessment to students, the quality of the learning results including the impact of instruction on student learning at all levels of performance, and the equity of learning that examines the results of student learning across all demographics;
- a stakeholder engagement instrument that examines the fidelity of administration and results of perception surveys seeking the perspective of students, parents, and teachers;
- a state-of-the-art, learner-centric observation instrument, the Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™) that quantifies students' engagement, attitudes and dispositions organized in 7 environments: Equitable Learning, High Expectations, Supportive Learning, Active Learning, Progress Monitoring and Feedback, Well-Managed Learning, and Digital Learning. All evaluators must be trained, reach acceptable levels of inter-rater reliability, and certified to use this research-based and validated instrument.

The External Review Team's findings and critical observations are shared in this report through the IEQ™ results as well as through the identification of Powerful Practices, Opportunities for Improvement, and Improvement Priorities.

Index of Education Quality

In the past, accreditation reviews resulted in an accreditation recommendation on status. Labels such as advised, warned, probation, or all clear were used to describe the status of a school relative to the AdvancED Standards and other evaluative criteria. Beginning in the 2013-14 school year, AdvancED introduced a new framework to describe the results of an accreditation review. Consistent with the modern focus of accreditation on continuous improvement with an emphasis on student success, AdvancED introduced an innovative and state-of-the-art framework for diagnosing and revealing institutional performance called the Index of Education Quality (IEQ™). The IEQ™ comprises three domains of performance: 1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; 2) the capacity of leadership to guide the institution toward the achievement of its

vision and strategic priorities; and 3) use of resources to support and optimize learning. Therefore, your institution will no longer receive an accreditation status. Instead, your institution will be accredited with an IEQ™ score. In the case where an institution is failing to meet established criteria, the accreditation will be under review thereby requiring frequent monitoring and demonstrated improvement.

The three domains of performance are derived from the AdvancED Standards and associated indicators, the analysis of student performance, and the engagement and feedback of stakeholders. Within each domain institutions can connect to the individual performance levels that are applied in support of the AdvancED Standards and evaluative criteria. Within the performance levels are detailed descriptors that serve as a valuable source of guidance for continuous improvement. Upon review of the findings in this report and building on their Powerful Practices, institutional leaders should work with their staff to review and understand the evidence and rationale for each Opportunity for Improvement and Improvement Priority as well as the corresponding pathway to improvement described in the performance levels of the selected indicator(s).

The IEQ™ provides a new framework that recognizes and supports the journey of continuous improvement. An institution's IEQ™ is the starting point for continuous improvement. Subsequent actions for improvement and evidence that these have had a positive impact will raise the institution's IEQ™ score.

Benchmark Data

Throughout this report, AdvancED provides benchmark data for each indicator and for each component of the evaluative criteria. These benchmark data represent the overall averages across the entire AdvancED Network for your institution type. Thus, the AdvancED Network average provides an extraordinary opportunity for institutions to understand their context on a global scale rather than simply compared to a state, region, or country.

It is important to understand that the AdvancED Network averages are provided primarily to serve as a tool for continuous improvement and not as a measure of quality in and of itself. Benchmark data, when wisely employed, have a unique capacity to help institutions identify and leverage their strengths and areas of improvement to significantly impact student learning.

Powerful Practices

A key to continuous improvement is the institution's ability to learn from and build upon its most effective and impactful practices. Such practices serve as critical leverage points necessary to guide, support and ensure continuous improvement. A hallmark of the accreditation process is its commitment to identifying with evidence, the conditions, processes and practices that are having the most significant impact on student performance and institutional effectiveness. Throughout this report, the External Review Team has captured and defined Powerful Practices. These noteworthy practices are essential to the institution's effort to continue its journey of improvement.

Opportunities for Improvement

Every institution can and must improve no matter what levels of performance it has achieved in its past. During the process of the review, the External Review Team identified areas of improvement where the institution is meeting the expectations for accreditation but in the professional judgment of the Team these are Opportunities for Improvement that should be considered by the institution. Using the criteria described in the corresponding rubric(s) to the Opportunity for Improvement, the institution can identify what elements of practice must be addressed to guide the improvement.

Improvement Priorities

The expectations for accreditation are clearly defined in a series of the rubric-based AdvancED Standards, indicators and evaluative criteria focused on the impact of teaching and learning on student performance, the capacity of the institution to be guided by effective leadership, and the allocation and use of resources to support student learning. As such, the External Review Team reviewed, analyzed and deliberated over significant bodies of evidence provided by the institution and gathered by the Team during the process. In the professional judgment of the Team as well as the results of the diagnostic process, the Team defined, with rationale, Improvement Priorities. The priorities must be addressed in a timely manner by the institution to retain and improve their accreditation performance as represented by the IEQ™. Improvement Priorities serve as the basis for the follow-up and monitoring process that will begin upon conclusion of the External Review. The institution must complete and submit an Accreditation Progress Report within two years of the External Review. The report must include actions taken by the institution to address the Improvement Priorities along with the corresponding evidence and results. The IEQ™ will be recalculated by AdvancED upon review of the evidence and results associated with the Improvement Priorities.

The Review

The AdvancED External Review for Montessori Kids Academy was conducted over a two-day period, March 1-2, 2017. The Team began preparations for the Review in December 2016. Through electronic meetings, phone conferencing, phone calls, and individual communications, Team members studied and analyzed the school's Accreditation Report, website, and other evidences provided by the school prior to the Review. Team members focused on the AdvancED Standards and Indicators and listed evidences and artifacts that were needed to ensure the accuracy of the school's ratings. The Lead Evaluator communicated with the school on a regular basis from December 2016, until the time of the Review. The four-member Team arrived onsite on the evening of February 28, 2017, had dinner with the school's administrator and four lead teachers, and conducted its first work session.

The Team thanks the school for their efforts through their Internal Review, for their transparency, honesty, openness, and for their commitment to the process of school improvement. The school conducted surveys, collected artifacts, and closely examined their organization in preparation for the Review. The school provided Team members with electronic access to numerous artifacts that were catalogued and arranged by Standard and Indicator. Other documentation was provided through notebooks and portfolios. Appreciation is given to the parents, staff, community representatives, and students who gave of their time for stakeholder interviews.

Appreciation is also given to the school leadership who did all that was necessary to make the Review a productive process.

Stakeholders were interviewed by members of the External Review Team to gain their perspectives on topics relevant to the institution's effectiveness and student performance. The feedback gained through the stakeholder interviews was considered with other evidences and data to support the findings of the External Review. The following chart depicts the numbers of persons interviewed representative of various stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder Interviewed	Number
Administrators	1
Instructional Staff	9
Support Staff	9
Students	45
Parents/Community/Business Leaders	8
Total	72

Results

Teaching and Learning Impact

The impact of teaching and learning on student achievement is the primary expectation of every institution. The relationship between teacher and learner must be productive and effective for student success. The impact of teaching and learning includes an analysis of student performance results, instructional quality, learner and family engagement, support services for student learning, curriculum quality and efficacy, and college and career readiness data. These are all key indicators of an institution's impact on teaching and learning.

A high-quality and effective educational 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 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 that include strong communication skills, knowledge of content, and knowledge of how to teach the content. The institution'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, J., Kunter, M., Blum, W., Brunner, M., Voxx, T., Jordan, A., Klusmann, U., Krauss, S., Nuebrand, M., & Tsai, Y., 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, J., Brown, R., Choi, S., & Thomas, S., 2008). According to Marks, Louis, and Printy (2002), staff members who engage in "active organizational learning also have higher achieving students in contrast to those that do not." Likewise, a study conducted by Horng, Klasik, and Loeb (2010), concluded that leadership in effective institutions "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 that a successful institution implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning. The curriculum 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.

Institutions with strong improvement processes move beyond anxiety about the current reality and focus on priorities and initiatives for the future. Using results, i.e., data and other information, to guide continuous improvement is key to an institution's success. A study conducted by Datnow, Park, and 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, J., Pane, J., Barney, H., & Christina, R., 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 institutional 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).

Through ongoing evaluation of educational institutions, AdvancED has found 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 3 - Teaching and Assessing for Learning

The school's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning.

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
3.1	The school'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.	3.25	2.82
3.2	Curriculum, instruction, and assessment are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice.	2.25	2.45
3.3	Teachers engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	3.00	2.63
3.4	School leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	3.00	2.69
3.5	Teachers participate in collaborative learning communities to improve instruction and student learning.	3.00	2.52
3.6	Teachers implement the school's instructional process in support of student learning.	3.00	2.56
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the school's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	3.00	2.56
3.8	The school engages families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keeps them informed of their children's learning progress.	3.25	3.07

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
3.9	The school has a formal structure whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the school who supports that student's educational experience.	4.00	3.01
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.	3.00	2.71
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	3.00	2.48
3.12	The school provides and coordinates learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	2.50	2.63

Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement

The school implements a comprehensive assessment system that generates a range of data about student learning and school effectiveness and uses the results to guide continuous improvement.

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
5.1	The school establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	2.75	2.64
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.	1.75	2.33
5.3	Professional and support staff are trained in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.	2.00	2.03
5.4	The school engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level.	3.00	2.45
5.5	Leadership monitors and communicates comprehensive information about student learning, conditions that support student learning, and the achievement of school improvement goals to stakeholders.	2.25	2.68

Student Performance Diagnostic

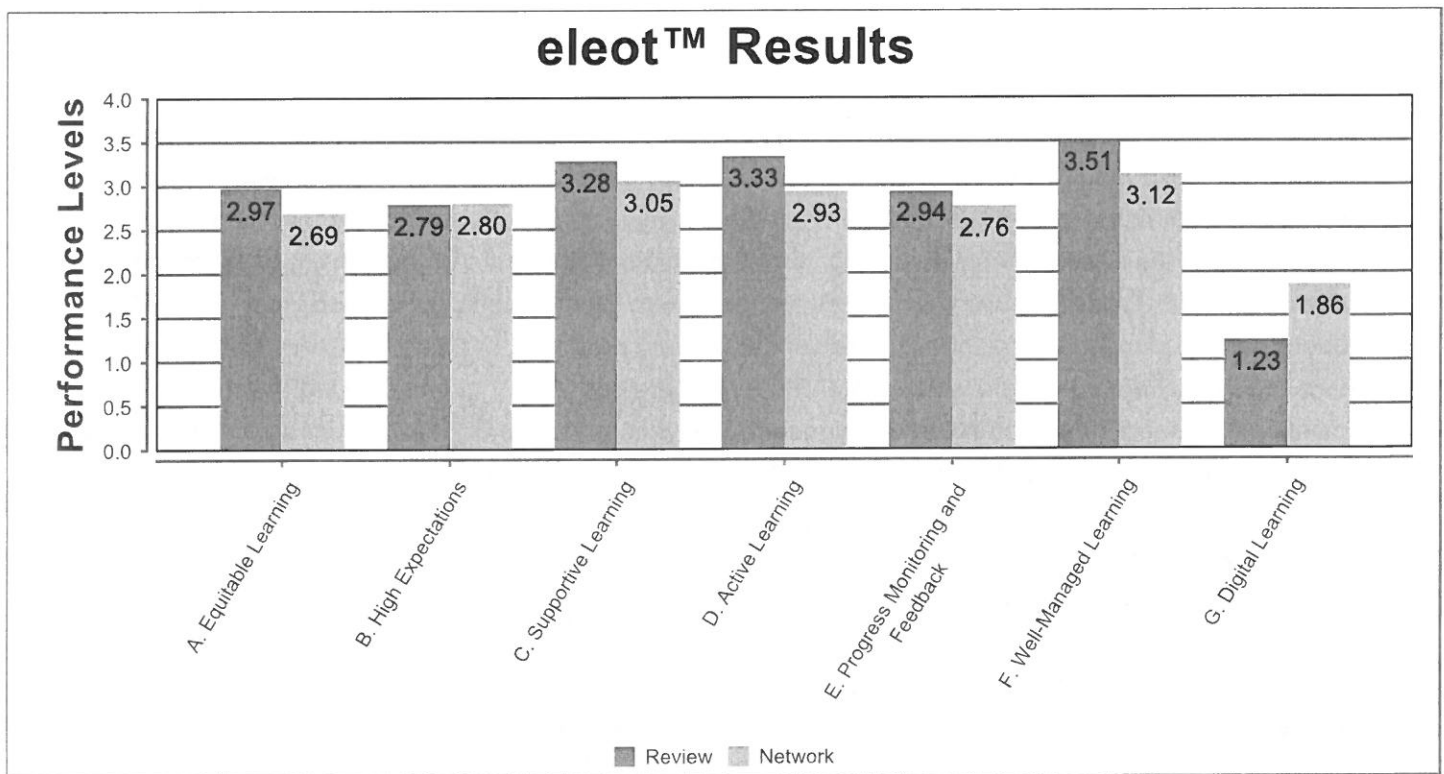
The quality of assessments used to measure student learning, assurance that assessments are administered with procedural fidelity and appropriate accommodations, assessment results that reflect the quality of learning, and closing gaps in achievement among subpopulations of students are all important indicators for evaluating overall student performance.

Evaluative Criteria	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
Assessment Quality	3.00	3.11
Test Administration	4.00	3.46
Equity of Learning	3.00	2.75
Quality of Learning	3.25	2.93

Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™)

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. Every member of the External Review Team is required to be trained and pass a certification exam that establishes inter-rater reliability. Team members conduct multiple observations during the review process and provide ratings on 30 items based on a four-point scale (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 seven learning environments included in eleot™ as well as benchmark results across the AdvancED Network.



On the first day of the External Review, Team members conducted twenty-eight classroom observations using the Effective Learning Environment Observation Tool (eleot®). The highest score of 3.51 was recorded in the Well-Managed Environment which is .39 higher than the AdvancED Network average of 3.12. The Active Learning and Supportive Learning Environments received the next two highest scores of 3.33 and 3.28 respectively. The Active Learning Environment score is .40 points higher than the Network average of 2.93.

The school's Supportive Learning Environment score is .23 points higher than the AdvancED Network average of 3.05.

The next two highest school scores of 2.97 in the Equitable Learning Environment and 2.94 in the Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment were also above the AdvancED Network averages. The Equitable Environment score was .28 points higher than the Network average of 2.69 and the Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment was .18 points higher than the AdvancED Network average of 2.76. Five of the seven Learning Environment scores were between .18 and .40 points higher than the AdvancED Network averages.

The school's final elect scores were both lower than the AdvancED Network averages. The school scored a 2.79 in the High Expectations Environment which is .01 points below the Network average of 2.80. The school also scored a 1.23 in the Digital Learning Environment which is .63 points below the AdvancED Network average of 1.86. The Digital Learning Environment score may be slightly skewed in that four elect observations were done in classrooms where the students were under three years of age. Sixteen of the observations were done in classrooms where the students were three, four, and five years old. In several of these observations, the use of digital resources would have been inappropriate. Additionally, traditional Montessori classrooms have minimal use of digital learning equipment. Digital learning was observed in classrooms where older children were being served. In those instances, the technology was used appropriately and effectively.

School procedures, processes, and protocols were evident throughout the facility. Students were extremely well-behaved, polite, and respectful to each other, to adults, and to their environment. Classes were conducted in a calm and peaceful atmosphere and even the youngest of students demonstrated an understanding of their assignments and work. Quiet music could be heard as students moved from one activity to another. Transitions were seamless and done with little disruption or wasted time. Student collaboration was done in a quiet and courteous manner and peer mentoring was observed across all age levels. Teachers were warm and welcoming. Students were completely at ease asking questions for clarification or a deeper understanding of a concept. A low pupil/teacher ratio was observed in all classrooms. These observations support Indicator ratings in Standards One, Three, and Four.

The classroom culture was extremely positive. Both students and teachers could be overheard expressing positive attitudes about learning experiences. As one young student completed the math assignment, the teacher was overheard saying, "I'm so very proud of you! You're getting ready for bigger numbers." When a student needed redirection, it was quickly given in a quiet manner that affirmed the child's desire to learn and be successful. All students were actively engaged as there were often eight different assignments being completed simultaneously. Instructional individualization and differentiation occurred across the school as students were assisted with their choice of work. The school employs a curriculum director, a math coach, and a reading coach to assist with instruction in the classrooms. These observations support ratings in Standard 3.1, 3.3, 3.6, and 3.12.

Student work was consistently related to real-life experiences. Students were observed moving from assignment to assignment always ensuring that their work space was left in an orderly fashion and that their

classroom was clean and neat. When classwork was completed, students took their work to the filing box and placed their work in the appropriate space. Many students greeted guests who entered the room with a warm handshake, a polite introduction, and a welcome to their room. Others easily spoke about their work and were able to articulate what they were doing and why. Opportunities to be a student leader were evident and children were eager to demonstrate their skills. One young student was overheard explaining to the teacher, "I'm helping her." The teacher warmly smiled, allowed the two to continue, and later acknowledged the work completed collaboratively. Another student proclaimed, "I like that I can be a leader!" Yet another student proudly brought work to the teacher and said, "Let me show you my work diary." These observations also support ratings in Standard Three.

The school also enjoys soothing, pleasant surroundings filled with many manipulatives, lots of resources, and an impressive array of plants and animals. Beautiful live plants, including a lemon tree bearing fruit, were observed in every classroom and throughout the campus. Several varieties of birds are housed at the school along with guinea pigs, hermit crabs, fish, guineas, and chickens. The children are intricately involved in caring for these living organisms and obviously enjoy having them in their school. The students also benefit from an impressive outdoor classroom where they can participate in gardening experiments or go for quiet reflection to think. The third floor of the school houses a student gymnasium where physical education and exercise can be a part of the student day regardless of the weather. These many resources in a sparkling clean facility support ratings in Standard Four.

While the school is fortunate to enjoy a diverse culture with students from many nationalities, the Team observed minimal opportunities to learn about other's backgrounds, cultures, and differences. Stakeholder interviews, however, confirmed that cultural diversity is often celebrated at the school and intertwined throughout the curriculum. Technology, while rare in a traditional Montessori school, was used at the school appropriately and effectively. Numerous stakeholders confirmed the school combines the best of both Montessori concepts and values with traditional schooling to deliver outstanding educational opportunities for children to succeed. Many of these adjustments have been made in response to stakeholder feedback.

Montessori Kids Academy was a pleasure to observe and in which to conduct the Review. Classrooms were orderly, well-managed, respectful, and positive. Staff members and students alike demonstrated that they enjoyed being at the school and that they genuinely liked each other. A culture of mutual respect was observed, spoken, and felt among all stakeholders as the school days unfolded. Their commitment to "cultivate a desire to learn" was evident in every aspect of the school.

eleot™ Data Summary

A. Equitable Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.43	Has differentiated learning opportunities and activities that meet her/his needs	64.29%	21.43%	7.14%	7.14%
2.	3.57	Has equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	78.57%	10.71%	0.00%	10.71%
3.	3.14	Knows that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied	46.43%	32.14%	10.71%	10.71%
4.	1.75	Has ongoing opportunities to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/differences	10.71%	14.29%	14.29%	60.71%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.97						

B. High Expectations			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.18	Knows and strives to meet the high expectations established by the teacher	53.57%	25.00%	7.14%	14.29%
2.	3.25	Is tasked with activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	57.14%	21.43%	10.71%	10.71%
3.	2.07	Is provided exemplars of high quality work	10.71%	28.57%	17.86%	42.86%
4.	2.86	Is engaged in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks	32.14%	39.29%	10.71%	17.86%
5.	2.61	Is asked and responds to questions that require higher order thinking (e.g., applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	21.43%	39.29%	17.86%	21.43%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.79						

C. Supportive Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.54	Demonstrates or expresses that learning experiences are positive	78.57%	7.14%	3.57%	10.71%
2.	3.54	Demonstrates positive attitude about the classroom and learning	75.00%	14.29%	0.00%	10.71%
3.	3.00	Takes risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	46.43%	28.57%	3.57%	21.43%
4.	3.36	Is provided support and assistance to understand content and accomplish tasks	60.71%	25.00%	3.57%	10.71%
5.	2.96	Is provided additional/alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level of challenge for her/his needs	39.29%	35.71%	7.14%	17.86%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.28						

D. Active Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.50	Has several opportunities to engage in discussions with teacher and other students	75.00%	10.71%	3.57%	10.71%
2.	2.79	Makes connections from content to real-life experiences	35.71%	32.14%	7.14%	25.00%
3.	3.71	Is actively engaged in the learning activities	85.71%	7.14%	0.00%	7.14%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.33						

E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.07	Is asked and/or quizzed about individual progress/learning	53.57%	21.43%	3.57%	21.43%
2.	3.21	Responds to teacher feedback to improve understanding	60.71%	17.86%	3.57%	17.86%
3.	3.18	Demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of the lesson/content	53.57%	28.57%	0.00%	17.86%
4.	2.36	Understands how her/his work is assessed	21.43%	32.14%	7.14%	39.29%
5.	2.89	Has opportunities to revise/improve work based on feedback	35.71%	35.71%	10.71%	17.86%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.94						

F. Well-Managed Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.82	Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers	89.29%	7.14%	0.00%	3.57%
2.	3.75	Follows classroom rules and works well with others	82.14%	14.29%	0.00%	3.57%
3.	3.50	Transitions smoothly and efficiently to activities	64.29%	28.57%	0.00%	7.14%
4.	2.96	Collaborates with other students during student-centered activities	46.43%	28.57%	0.00%	25.00%
5.	3.50	Knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences	67.86%	21.43%	3.57%	7.14%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.51						

G. Digital Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	1.29	Uses digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	7.14%	3.57%	0.00%	89.29%
2.	1.29	Uses digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	7.14%	3.57%	0.00%	89.29%
3.	1.11	Uses digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning	3.57%	0.00%	0.00%	96.43%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 1.23						

Findings

Improvement Priority

Develop and implement a process for collecting, analyzing, disaggregating, and utilizing data related to student achievement and organizational effectiveness and growth.

(Indicator 5.2)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 5.2

Evidence and Rationale

The External Review Team determined little evidence exists of the use of data for comparison, trends, instructional program evaluations, or organizational effectiveness. Artifacts reflected some data gathering but no analysis of data including disaggregation by sub-groups. Observations confirmed that much data are collected on individual students, but limited school-wide data are amassed. Interviews confirmed minimal training in the use of data has been provided.

Using data to drive the improvement efforts of the school is essential to continuous improvement.

Opportunity For Improvement

Update and improve the information communicated through the school's website.

(Indicator 5.5)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 5.5

Evidence and Rationale

Examination of the school's current website, reviews of artifacts, interviews with stakeholders, and observations in the school attest that the school's website is not current. Information contained on the site is outdated and may or may not be applicable to the school at the present time. Stakeholders acknowledge this deficit and state that the site needs to be improved. These updates and improvements are also listed in the School Improvement Plan.

A compelling, interesting, and current website is an essential component in communicating the school's comprehensive information to stakeholders.

Powerful Practice

School personnel consistently advocate for each student to support his/her educational experience. (Indicator 3.9)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.9

Evidence and Rationale

Classroom teachers have an exceptional rapport with students. This bond was observed by the Team in the interactions between the students and staff throughout the building. The Montessori philosophy supports the robust relationship of the student and teacher over a three-year span. Survey results from parents and students reflect the Team's findings as well as information shared during stakeholder interviews. Staff members strive to do what is best for students. This commitment is evident in their planning, curriculum, and continuous efforts toward improving the school.

The advocacy experienced by the students at this school is a positive building block for future educational success. Having a caring adult with whom to build a positive relationship and who will serve as an advocate for students' needs is beneficial to students as they mature in their educational environment.

Leadership Capacity

The capacity of leadership to ensure an institution's progress towards its stated objectives is an essential element of organizational effectiveness. An institution's leadership capacity includes the fidelity and commitment to its institutional purpose and direction, the effectiveness of governance and leadership to enable the institution to realize its stated objectives, the ability to engage and involve stakeholders in meaningful and productive ways, and the capacity to enact strategies to improve results of student learning.

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 evaluation of best practices in more than 32,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution commits to a shared purpose and direction and establishes expectations for student learning that are aligned with the institutions' vision and supported by internal and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and overall institution effectiveness.

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 educational institution leadership research, Leithwood and 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 their 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 communities to attain continuous 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 institutional 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's experience, gained through evaluation of best practices, has indicated 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 1 - Purpose and Direction

The school maintains and communicates a purpose and direction that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
1.1	The school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	1.00	2.73
1.2	The school's leadership and staff 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.	3.00	3.00
1.3	The school's leadership implements a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	2.00	2.52

Standard 2 - Governance and Leadership

The school operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and school effectiveness.

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the school.	3.00	2.95
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	3.00	2.90
2.3	The governing body ensures that the school leadership has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.	3.50	3.15
2.4	Leadership and staff foster a culture consistent with the school's purpose and direction.	4.00	3.11
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the school's purpose and direction.	3.00	2.79
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice and student success.	2.75	2.71

Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic

Stakeholder Feedback is the third of three primary areas of evaluation in AdvancED's Performance Accreditation model. The AdvancED surveys (student, parent, and teacher) are directly correlated to the AdvancED Standards and indicators. They provide not only direct information about stakeholder satisfaction but also become a source of data for triangulation by the External Review Team as it evaluates indicators.

Institutions are asked to collect and analyze stakeholder feedback data, then submit the data and the analyses to the External Review Team for review. The External Review Team evaluates the quality of the administration of the surveys by institution, survey results, and the degree to which the institution analyzed and acted on the results.

Evaluative Criteria	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
Questionnaire Administration	4.00	3.43
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	4.00	3.08

Findings

Improvement Priority

Develop, implement, and maintain a process to review, revise when needed, and communicate the school's purpose and direction for student success to all stakeholders at least annually.

(Indicator 1.1)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 1.1

Evidence and Rationale

From interviews with stakeholders, reviews of artifacts, and observations within the school, the External Review Team determined that a process for the regular review of the school's purpose and direction for student success was not formalized and documented. The school and community will benefit from an inclusive effort to shape the school's purpose to support its continued success.

The regular review of the school's purpose and direction for student success ensures active participation by all stakeholders and provides opportunity for ownership of the school's goals and beliefs.

Powerful Practice

Leadership and staff consistently and deliberately foster a culture which incorporates the school's purpose and direction into the everyday experiences of each stakeholder.

(Indicator 2.4)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 2.4

Evidence and Rationale

The commitment and dedication of school personnel to cultivate the desire to learn and inspire global citizenship are evident through observations in classes at every age level. The professional staff holds all students to high standards regarding respect, participation, and work performance. Parents and community members report through both surveys and interviews that the positive culture fostered at the school carries over into their homes. The professional staff states that they are appreciative of the family atmosphere and open-door approach from school's leadership. Numerous student portfolios and school artifacts attest to the strength of the school culture fostered by the leadership and staff.

The positive school culture is a major factor which distinguishes the school from other educational opportunities available in the area and provides an optimum environment for student success.

Resource Utilization

The use and distribution of resources must be aligned and supportive of the needs of an institution and the students served. Institutions must ensure that resources are aligned with the stated mission and are distributed equitably so that the needs of students are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes an examination of the allocation and use of resources, the equity of resource distribution to need, the ability of the institution to ensure appropriate levels of funding and sustainability of resources, as well as evidence of long-range capital and resource planning effectiveness.

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, D., Rudo, Z., Schneider, C., & Smith-Hansen, L., 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 the more than 32,000 institutions in the AdvancED Network that a successful institution has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, meets special needs, and complies with applicable regulations. The institution employs and allocates staff members 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 members to improve their effectiveness and ensures compliance with applicable governmental regulations.

Standard 4 - Resources and Support Systems

The school has resources and provides services that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.1	Qualified professional and support staff are sufficient in number to fulfill their roles and responsibilities necessary to support the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program.	2.75	2.95
4.2	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the school.	3.00	2.98
4.3	The school maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	4.00	3.14
4.4	Students and school personnel use a range of media and information resources to support the school's educational programs.	3.25	2.84
4.5	The technology infrastructure supports the school's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	3.00	2.63

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.6	The school provides support services to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	3.00	2.86
4.7	The school provides services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.	2.25	2.75

Findings

Powerful Practice

The school provides a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.
(Indicator 4.3)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 4.3

Evidence and Rationale

Supported by written stakeholder feedback, interviews, and observations in the facility, the Team found a sparkling clean and inviting environment in which to work and learn. Artifacts provided to the Team included documentation of emergency procedures, local and state compliance records, and extensive cleaning and maintenance schedules. A tremendous asset contributing to the environment of the school is the inclusion of a wide variety of birds, guinea pigs, hermit crabs, chickens, and fish. The school also enjoys many live plants and beautiful décor in the classrooms and common areas of the facility. An outdoor classroom enhances occasions for learning by providing natural green space for gardening experiences and quiet reflection.

A safe, clean, and well-maintained environment supports opportunities for students to learn.

Conclusion

Many general themes related to student success and organizational effectiveness were evident in the school. One of the school's greatest strengths is the care, dedication, and passion of the teaching staff. Faculty members are committed to providing students with a quality education that will prepare them for global citizenship. Core values include the love of learning, respectful relationships, outstanding academics, diverse communities, and a passion for living. These beliefs are embodied in the staff and transferred to the students both verbally and non-verbally throughout the day. Students and staff display a high degree of respect for each other and for their environment. Each child in the school is well-known and is matched to an adult advocate who serves that student for a minimum of three years. This three-year cycle has provided great stability and consistency for students as they mature in their educational environment. Stakeholders describe this as a "closely knit family" which has benefited each of its members.

Classroom instruction is exemplary. The robust curriculum is tailored to the individual student and his/her interests and abilities. Teachers provide engaging instructional strategies and seek to augment lessons with additional resources when extended learning opportunities arise. Student work is hands-on and is closely tied to real-life experiences. Teachers provide immediate feedback as students complete their "work contract" and provide time and support for remediation if needed. The three-hour work cycle is an uninterrupted time of learning where students are encouraged and supported as they pursue their work. Students are provided the opportunity to think critically and work creatively. Public speaking and presentations are woven into the curriculum at each age level providing students the chance to develop self-confidence and self-assurance as they learn to express themselves in a positive manner. A stakeholder described this process of "making independent little people" as one of the strengths of the school.

Students are provided numerous opportunities for collaboration and easily transition from working independently to working in a group. Peer mentoring is an integral part of each class as students readily help each other accomplish a task. Students are provided with a wide array of enrichment offerings at the school. Besides the traditional music, art, and physical education offered, the school offers French, Spanish, Coding, and Robotics. These additional courses have broadened the scope of the school's curriculum and enhanced learning for students. Expanding the traditional Montessori curriculum to include science experiments, science fair projects, numerous field trips, and integrated technology instruction has benefited the students of the school with, as one stakeholder expressed, "the best of both worlds." Another teacher/leader stated, "It is easy to stick to a strictly traditional Montessori curriculum, but it is essential to take into consideration new research and new ways of educating children." This innovative philosophy distinguishes this school from other similar educational institutions.

School leadership is strong, well respected, and provides an open-door policy to all stakeholders. The leadership and staff of the school are strongly committed to the school culture which is based in its purpose and direction. Adults in the school are passionate about the blended Montessori methods that are demonstrated and diligently seek to serve each student each day in the very best manner possible.

There are ample resources to meet the learning objectives of the school. The building and campus are warm,

welcoming, and inviting. Safety and security are a primary focus as the school is carefully monitored daily. The environment is peaceful and calm. Live plants and numerous birds and animals provide a natural setting which enhances a sense of serenity rarely felt in a school. Stakeholders hold each other accountable for the school environment and culture. Students of all ages care for their surroundings in an exceptional manner.

Communication with stakeholders is comprehensive and consistent. As a result of stakeholder feedback and surveys administered by the school, changes in the way the school communicated with parents were made. The school now sends two emails to parents weekly. One email is sent to the entire class detailing classroom activities and instruction for the week. The second email is sent to the individual student's parents delineating the exact work their child did in school. Eliminating cumbersome electronic reports and providing access directly from the teacher to the parent and parent to the teacher has proven to be a tremendously positive action. Along with weekly emails, the school also sends quarterly reports to parents which detail exactly how their child is doing when measured against competencies and standards of the curriculum. For students in kindergarten and higher, parents are also given results and explanations of the Stanford 10 standardized test which is administered twice yearly. Stakeholder surveys also revealed parents' desire for student homework at the primary level. The school now provides regular homework in an effort to help parents assist their children in mastery of objectives. These communicative efforts between school and home have resulted in a high degree of stakeholder satisfaction. One stakeholder reported, "I feel as though this school is on a journey together with the parent." This positive perception is pervasive throughout the school.

One challenge that the school faces is collecting, analyzing, and using available data to inform instruction and to evaluate school and program effectiveness. The Montessori methods of grading and assessing students provide challenges to collection of applicable data. However, the school has already begun to formulate methods and ideas regarding data collection such as percentages of students who have reached a certain educational milestone by a certain age, percentages of students who experience a high degree of success at the next level, etc. Since the school does administer the Stanford 10 twice a year to students in kindergarten and above, school leaders have a greater opportunity to amass relevant data than other Montessori schools. The school should also share their comprehensive academic successes with the greater community. Collecting, analyzing, and utilizing data in this manner will achieve many of the goals and objectives outlined in the School Improvement Plan.

While the school has remained true to its purpose and direction, these guiding statements have not been reviewed with stakeholders for several years. A documented process to keep the purpose and direction of the school in the forefront of stakeholder's minds is essential for continued success. Allowing stakeholders this voice will provide a greater degree of stakeholder input and ownership of the school.

The school's website is outdated and does not contain relevant information. Some information on the website is more than five years old. While the school does maintain a current Facebook page, the website's electronic footprint is often the first impression many have of the school. Updating this site is crucial.

Finally, the school should consider improvements to the exterior playground area for younger children. While the water park provides an excellent area for children during hot and humid seasons, children also need

outdoor play areas which provide ample room for gross motor development during other times of the year. The school should also consider modifying cafeteria furniture to meet the needs of the older children in the school. Having adequately sized furnishings for older and larger children will foster a healthier environment in which to work and learn.

The Improvement Priorities designated by the Team will provide an initial roadmap for continued growth and improvement in the school. The school's capacity for improvement is evident and apparent in all aspects of the organization. With the reinforcement of the school's purpose and direction, the impactful use of data to inform instruction and make curriculum adjustments, and the communication of school-wide data on school achievements and initiatives, there is no limit to the success this school can achieve. Montessori Kids Academy has the potential to be the Georgia model for twenty-first century Montessori education.

Improvement Priorities

The institution should use the findings from this review to guide the continuous improvement process. The institution must address the Improvement Priorities listed below:

- Develop and implement a process for collecting, analyzing, disaggregating, and utilizing data related to student achievement and organizational effectiveness and growth.
- Develop, implement, and maintain a process to review, revise when needed, and communicate the school's purpose and direction for student success to all stakeholders at least annually.

Accreditation Recommendation

Index of Education Quality

The Index of Education Quality (IEQ™) provides a holistic measure of overall performance based on a comprehensive set of indicators and evaluative criteria. A formative tool for improvement, it identifies areas of success as well as areas in need of focus.

The IEQ™ comprises three domains: 1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; 2) the leadership capacity to govern; and 3) the use of resources and data to support and optimize learning.

The overall and domain scores can range from 100-400. The domain scores are derived from: the AdvancED Standards and indicators ratings; results of the Analysis of Student Performance; and data from Stakeholder Feedback Surveys (students, parents, and staff).

	External Review IEQ Score	AdvancED Network Average
Overall Score	296.79	278.94
Teaching and Learning Impact	291.67	268.48
Leadership Capacity	302.27	293.71
Resource Utilization	303.57	286.27

The IEQ™ results include information about how the institution is performing compared to expected criteria as well as to other institutions in the AdvancED Network. The institution should use the information in this report, including the corresponding performance rubrics, to identify specific areas of improvement.

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

Addenda

Team Roster

Member	Brief Biography
Mrs. Kay H Sledge	After more than 34 years in education, Ms. Kay Sledge retired having served the students and communities of Georgia's Clayton County Public Schools. During her career she served as chief academic officer, assistant superintendent, executive director, principal, assistant principal, guidance counselor, and classroom teacher. She holds her Bachelor's Degree from the University of Tennessee and two Master's Degrees and two Educational Specialist Degrees in School Counseling and in Educational Leadership and Supervision from the University of West Georgia. She has worked closely with AdvancED for over twenty-five years and has served on numerous External Reviews for both individual schools and school systems throughout the United States. Currently Ms. Sledge serves AdvancED as a Lead Evaluator for Georgia schools.
Ms. Renee Blackmar	Renee Blackmar is proud to serve as the Vice President of Finance for AdvancED. She joined the company in 2012 after many years in the accounting and internal audit fields for educational software and behavioral healthcare companies. Renee began her accounting career with Arthur Andersen. She holds a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Mercer University in Macon, Georgia and is a licensed CPA in South Carolina. Renee has a strong passion for the mission of AdvancED that all learners realize their full potential. It is her privilege and honor to serve as an External Review Team Member.
Mrs. Janet Gillam	Mrs. Gillam has a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood/Elementary education from Ohio University. She has over twenty five years of experience in classrooms in private schools. She has taught preschool through sixth grade. She has been employed with Lyndon Academy in Woodstock, Georgia, for six years. She is excited to be participating in her second AdvancEd visit.
Ms. Stacey Jean Learst	Stacey Learst joined the Goddard school in Dacula, Georgia, four years ago. Prior to her becoming the director of her school, she was the Preschool classroom lead teacher for the school for a year and a half before being promoted. She has her associates degree with a specialization in special needs. Currently, Stacey is in pursuit of her bachelor's in Early Childhood education with a specialization in special needs. Stacey has a love and a passion for educating children and outside of her professional career she is very involved and a member of the NACEY organization. She has a passion for children and learning.

Next Steps

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with 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. Consider the Opportunities for Improvement identified throughout the report that are provided by the team in the spirit of continuous improvement and the institution's commitment to improving its capacity to improve student learning.
4. Develop action plans to address the Improvement Priorities identified by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward addressing the Improvement Priorities.
5. Use the report to guide and strengthen the institution's efforts to improve student performance and system effectiveness.
6. Following the External Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the Improvement Priorities. Institutions are required to respond to all Improvement Priorities. The report will be reviewed at the appropriate state, national, and/or international levels to monitor and ensure that the system has implemented the necessary actions to address the Improvement Priorities. The accreditation status will be reviewed and acted upon based on the responses to the Improvement Priorities and the resulting improvement.
7. Continue to meet the AdvancED Standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

About AdvancED

AdvancED is the world leader in providing improvement and accreditation services to education providers of all types in their pursuit of excellence in serving students. AdvancED serves as a trusted partner to more than 32,000 public and private schools and school systems – enrolling more than 20 million students - across the United States and 70 countries.

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, and 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 (NWAC) that was founded in 1917 became part of AdvancED.

Today, NCA CASI, NWAC and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED. The Accreditation Divisions of AdvancED share research-based quality standards that cross school system, state, regional, national, and international boundaries. Accompanying these standards is a unified and consistent process designed to engage educational institutions in continuous improvement.

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