

Quick Summary of AdvancED Findings from TCS 2015 External Review

Findings: Teaching and Learning Impact (Standards 3 & 5)

- **Powerful Practice (Commendation):** The Transylvania County School System has very dedicated and supportive teachers and principals at all schools who promote student engagement and the implementation of effective instructional processes. (Indicators 3.3, 3.6)
- **Improvement Priority (Required Action):** Develop and implement a systemic process for vertical and horizontal articulation of the curriculum, among and between all grade levels and schools, to monitor student progress and ensure readiness for future grade levels. (Indicators 3.5)
- **Improvement Priority (Required Action):** Utilize student results systematically to design, implement, and evaluate the results of continuous improvement plans related to student learning. (Indicators 5.4)
- **Opportunity for Improvement (Recommendation):** Monitor and systematically adjust curriculum, instruction, and assessment system-wide in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practices to provide equitable and diverse learning experiences for all students. (Indicators 3.2)
- **Opportunity for Improvement (Recommendation):** Provide professional development training for certified and support staff in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data. (Indicators 5.3)

Findings: Leadership Capacity (Standards 1 & 2)

- **Improvement Priority (Required Action):** Develop and implement a comprehensive system strategic plan that includes specific and measurable targets for all actions associated with strategic goals in order to guide the improvement process. (Indicators 1.4)
- **Improvement Priority (Required Action):** Ensure that each school engages in a systematic process for the completion of a self assessment report, an executive summary, AdvancED assurances and student performance data reports. (Indicators 1.2)
- **Opportunity for Improvement (Recommendation):** Develop and implement a comprehensive system-wide communication plan to ensure effective two-way communications among all internal and external stakeholders. (Indicators 2.5)

Findings: Resources and Support Systems (Standard 4)

- **Powerful Practice (Commendation):** The system has created a supportive, safe, and orderly environment which is conducive for student learning. (Indicators 4.3)
- **Opportunity for Improvement (Recommendation):** Develop a system-wide plan to include a process to evaluate the effectiveness of support systems to meet the social and emotional needs of the students served. (Indicators 4.7)

Organizing the Findings:

- **Powerful Practices** are commendations where the review team thought our system performed well-above expectations.
- **Improvement Priorities** are required actions that the system must report progress on resolution over the next two years. Within two years, each improvement priority must be addressed to the satisfaction of AdvancED to maintain accreditation.
- **Opportunities for Improvement** are recommendations that the team or team members suggested that the system incorporate into our efforts to improve. An opportunity for improvement has no reporting requirement and these items are not required to be addressed in order to maintain accreditation.

External Review Team's Conclusion *(excerpt from final exit report):*

The External Review Team identified two "Powerful Practices" that became evident during the review process. These powerful practices relate to student engagement based on instructional processes and a safe learning environment. The system's general themes as perceived by the Team are as follows: The leadership and staff throughout the system have a commitment to a culture of shared values and beliefs of teaching and learning. A strong sense of school and community pride is evident throughout the school system. Students, teachers, parents and the community are loyal to the schools and have a great sense of pride for their system. It is also evident that the vision of the Transylvania County School System and the individual schools clearly focus on student learning.

The External Review Team identified four "Improvement Priorities" that became evident during the review process. The improvement priorities relate to strategic planning, vertical articulation, verifiable improvement in student learning and systematic monitoring of schools assessment systems. The system's general themes as perceived by the Team are as follows: development and implementation of a comprehensive district strategic plan to guide the improvement process in order to increase student achievement; development and implementation of a systemic process for vertical and horizontal articulation of the curriculum, among and between all grade levels and schools; utilization of student results systematically to design, implement, and evaluate the results of continuous improvement plans related to student learning; and engaging in systematic processes for monitoring and maintaining data on all schools.

Although the school system has curriculum documents, there is a need for reviewing and revising them on a regular basis. It was also evident to the Team that a comprehensive process for evaluating the effectiveness of current programs is needed. Other opportunities for improvement focus primarily on stakeholder feedback and professional learning in the areas of interpretation of data and understanding equity and diversity in the classroom.

Some significant challenges lay ahead of the school system as state and federal dollars continue to decline and as the local (county) expenditure is the primary alternative for funding. Further, the system's facilities are aging, and many sites require extensive renovation and modernization. The board of education is currently working to develop a new long-range facility master plan and is considering proposing a school bond referendum. The board has contracted with North Carolina State University to conduct an Integrated Planning for School and Community Study to forecast enrollment trends and system needs for the upcoming decade. This study is scheduled to be completed by June 2015.

The system has done well to maintain strong performance and provide appropriate student support services in the face of declining revenues and drastically increasing student poverty in the last decade. In

spite of these challenges, the Transylvania County School System moves forward in its quest for providing an excellent education for its students.

As Team members experienced each phase of the accreditation process, it became evident that instruction must be the main focus for continuous improvement and felt confident this would happen in Transylvania County Schools. There are dedicated teachers and administrators, a supportive board that knows its roles and responsibilities and a supportive community. There is work to be done, but the Transylvania County School System has a dedication to its students and community. During the superintendent's closing meeting, next steps were shared to help explain how the various actions left by the Team support the system's desire to achieve its goals of excellence for its students.

The method in which Transylvania County School System approaches the Improvement Priorities and Opportunities for Improvement will be important. The actions are a guide to success for all students and for continuous improvement across all areas. The Team believed that a collaborative process for designing strategies for implementing the actions can build needed ownership by all stakeholders. Transylvania County Schools is positioned for success. The system now has a road-map that becomes the foundation for growth and sustained continuous improvement as the dedicated members of this system fulfill their mission to prepare students to become caring and productive citizens in an ever-changing society.