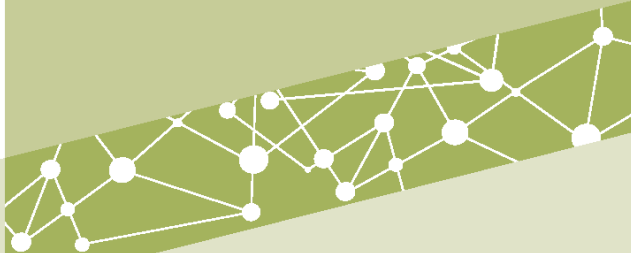**March 12-13, 2018**

AdvancED®
Engagement
Review Report

AdvancED® Performance Accreditation

» **Results for:**
International Community School
2418 Wood Trail Lane
Decatur, Georgia 30033

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Introduction

AdvancED Performance Accreditation and the Engagement Review

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

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

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

Stakeholder Groups	Number
Students	12
Leadership	2
Teachers	15
Parents	15
Board Members	4
Total	48

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

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

AdvancED Continuous Improvement System

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

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

Continuous Improvement Journey Narrative

The International Community School, as a charter school of the Dekalb County School District, was bound by the specifications within the charter petition and its Title I Comprehensive School Improvement Plan. Additionally, the school's improvement efforts were guided by a Strategic Plan that was written under the leadership of the board and funded by a grant. Teachers and parent volunteers worked on the plan with input from the current principal who had been appointed at the end of the process and the board hosted town hall meetings to gather input throughout the process. The Strategic Plan included the intention to focus on one academic area for each year and specific goals for operations, fundraising, communications, and community values. In order to measure effectiveness, the school monitored the following:

- Are we fulfilling our mission and vision?
- Are students learning?
- Are we meeting our charter goals?
- Are we making progress on our strategic plan?
- Are our students safe and happy?

The school gathered data on student learning by administering the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) and Fountas and Pinnell reading inventories as well as teacher-made assessments. The principal led data analysis efforts by distributing data from various sources to appropriate stakeholders and meeting with teachers to adjust instruction based on results of the analysis. He reported that teachers came to data meetings three times each year having already analyzed data and made adjustments to instruction. A data wall was updated regularly in the principal's office. When asked how they knew students were learning, teachers responded that they gathered anecdotal evidence from student participation in class and assessment data from teacher-made tests as well as using MAP as a predictor for student performance on Georgia's Milestones Assessment Program. They were concerned that students might not do their best on these assessments that were administered three times each year. They lamented that MAP was the "only thing" that was used as a formative assessment and that it might not be a good predictor of student performance in some content areas at certain grade levels. However, they acknowledged the gains that had been made in student performance because of the use of data to focus instruction. At the end of the first full year of implementing data-driven instruction, the school boasted a 14 point increase on Georgia's College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI). During the current school year, the school focused on improving literacy skills with plans to focus on mathematics achievement during the

next school year.

Qualitative data were gathered using Georgia Parent, Student, and Staff Surveys, an annual Teaching Working Conditions Survey, and annual parent surveys. Data gathered from these sources were analyzed by the leadership team and shared with staff and board members.

The team was impressed with the consistency of the use of data to guide decision-making in all areas of the school. Teachers, board members, and the leadership team talked about the use of data to guide discussions and decisions in all areas of the school. Because of the school's recent success in a number of areas, including student achievement, the principal was invited to present at the Georgia Charter School Association Convention on the topic of Turn-Around Schools.

AdvancED Standards Diagnostic Results

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

Leadership Capacity Domain

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

Leadership Capacity Standards		Rating
1.1	The institution commits to a purpose statement that defines beliefs about teaching and learning including the expectations for learners.	**Exceeds Expectations**
1.2	Stakeholders collectively demonstrate actions to ensure the achievement of the institution's purpose and desired outcomes for learners.	**Exceeds Expectations**
1.3	The institution engages in a continuous improvement process that produces evidence, including measurable results of improving student learning and professional practice.	**Exceeds Expectations**
1.4	The governing authority establishes and ensures adherence to policies that are designed to support institutional effectiveness.	**Exceeds Expectations**
1.5	The governing authority adheres to a code of ethics and functions within defined roles and responsibilities.	**Exceeds Expectations**
1.6	Leaders implement staff supervision and evaluation processes to improve professional practice and organizational effectiveness.	**Exceeds Expectations**
1.7	Leaders implement operational process and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness in support of teaching and learning.	**Exceeds Expectations**
1.8	Leaders engage stakeholders to support the achievement of the institution's purpose and direction.	**Exceeds Expectations**

Leadership Capacity Standards		Rating
1.9	The institution provides experiences that cultivate and improve leadership effectiveness.	**Exceeds Expectations**
1.10	Leaders collect and analyze a range of feedback data from multiple stakeholder groups to inform decision-making that results in improvement.	**Exceeds Expectations**

Learning Capacity Domain

The impact of teaching and learning on student achievement and success is the primary expectation of every institution. An effective learning culture is characterized by positive and productive teacher/learner relationships; high expectations and standards; a challenging and engaging curriculum; quality instruction and comprehensive support that enable all learners to be successful; and assessment practices (formative and summative) that monitor and measure learner progress and achievement. Moreover, a quality institution evaluates the impact of its learning culture, including all programs and support services, and adjusts accordingly.

Learning Capacity Standards		Rating
2.1	Learners have equitable opportunities to develop skills and achieve the content and learning priorities established by the institution.	Meets Expectations
2.2	The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation and collaborative problem-solving.	Exceeds Expectations
2.3	The learning culture develops learners' attitudes, beliefs and skills needed for success.	Exceeds Expectations
2.4	The institution has a formal structure to ensure learners develop positive relationships with and have adults/peers who support their educational experiences.	Meets Expectations
2.5	Educators implement a curriculum that is based on high expectations and prepares learners for their next levels.	Exceeds Expectations
2.6	The institution implements a process to ensure the curriculum is aligned to standards and best practices.	Meets Expectations
2.7	Instruction is monitored and adjusted to meet individual learners' needs and the institution's learning expectations.	Meets Expectations
2.8	The institution provides programs and services for learners' educational futures and career planning.	Exceeds Expectations
2.9	The institution implements, evaluates, and monitors processes to identify and address the specialized social, emotional, developmental, and academic needs of students.	Exceeds Expectations
2.10	Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.	Meets Expectations
2.11	Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to demonstrable improvement of student learning.	Meets Expectations
2.12	The institution implements a process to continuously assess its programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning.	Exceeds Expectations

Resource Capacity Domain

The use and distribution of resources support the stated mission of the institution. Institutions ensure that resources are distributed and utilized equitably so that the needs of all learners are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes support for professional learning for all staff. The institution examines the allocation and use of resources to ensure appropriate levels of funding, sustainability, organizational effectiveness, and increased student learning.

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

Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®) Results

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

eleot® Observations	
Total Number of eleot® Observations	**19**
Environments	**Rating**
Equitable Learning Environment	**3.38**
Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs	**2.84**

eleot® Observations	
Total Number of eleot® Observations	**19**
Environments	**Rating**
Learners have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	**3.47**
Learners are treated in a fair, clear and consistent manner	**3.79**
Learners demonstrate and/or have opportunities to develop empathy/respect/appreciation for differences in abilities, aptitudes, backgrounds, cultures, and/or other human characteristics, conditions and dispositions	**3.42**
High Expectations Environment	**3.02**
Learners strive to meet or are able to articulate the high expectations established by themselves and/or the teacher	**3.16**
Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	**3.26**
Learners demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work	**2.68**
Learners engage in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks that require the use of higher order thinking (e.g., analyzing, applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	**2.84**
Learners take responsibility for and are self-directed in their learning	**3.16**
Supportive Learning Environment	**3.45**
Learners demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful	**3.42**
Learners take risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	**3.42**
Learners are supported by the teacher, their peers and/or other resources to understand content and accomplish tasks	**3.47**
Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher	**3.47**
Active Learning Environment	**3.14**
Learners' discussions/dialogues/exchanges with each other and the teacher predominate	**3.11**
Learners make connections from content to real-life experiences	**2.89**
Learners are actively engaged in the learning activities	**3.47**
Learners collaborate with their peers to accomplish/complete projects, activities, tasks and/or assignments	**3.11**
Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment	**2.99**
Learners monitor their own learning progress or have mechanisms whereby their learning progress is monitored	**2.79**
Learners receive/respond to feedback (from teachers/peers/other resources) to improve understanding and/or revise work	**3.26**
Learners demonstrate and/or verbalize understanding of the lesson/content	**3.32**
Learners understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed	**2.58**
Well-Managed Learning Environment	**3.21**
Learners speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other	**3.53**
Learners demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others	**3.37**
Learners transition smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another	**2.63**
Learners use class time purposefully with minimal wasted time or disruptions	**3.32**
Digital Learning Environment	**1.60**
Learners use digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	**1.68**
Learners use digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	**1.53**
Learners use digital tools/technology to communicate and/or work collaboratively for learning	**1.58**

eleot® Narrative

The Engagement Review Team observed nineteen classes using the Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot 2.0). The ratings from eleot reported that the school scored highest in Supportive Learning and Equitable Learning Environments. Within these Environments, certain descriptors earned high ratings:

- Learners are supported by the teacher, their peers and/or other resources to understand content and accomplish tasks.
- Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher.
- Learners have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support.
- Learners are treated in a fair, clear and consistent manner.

Collaborating evidence was available from several sources, including the School Quality Factors Diagnostic. Under the Healthy Culture category, the school rated most instructional staff as having excellent relationships with learners that are supportive, caring, and congenial. Further supporting evidence was noted during student interviews in which 8 of 10 students said that they have everything they need to learn and every day is a good day. Students described the school as having a sense of community and teachers as being helpful, passionate, and caring. Parents reported that their children enjoyed attending the school and that snow days were sad days at their homes. During the current school year, teachers were encouraged to visit homes of their students to build a bond with the family and provide support for the students.

The lowest rated Environment was Digital Learning (1.60), with most observations reporting little use of digital tools by students. A teacher informed the team that two years ago there was no technology available in the school, but that much had been done to give access to technology in classrooms. SmartBoards and tablets/laptops were available in most classrooms. Each classroom had seven Chromebooks and seven notebooks. The team observed students in two mathematics classrooms using tablets to practice skills; fourth grade students used digital devices in a writing assignment, and third graders used technology in literacy centers. Teachers had received new laptops at the beginning of the school year. Parents also lamented the scant availability of technology in classrooms. The leadership team noted that 89 Chromebooks had been purchased and would be distributed to classrooms as soon as possible.

Several descriptors within other Environments also received lower ratings:
- Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs. Differentiation of learning opportunities was evident in a few classrooms, including an art class where students used rubrics to guide their individualized assignments and in a fourth grade class focused on writing skills. The Leadership Team described a "school within a school" strategy in which volunteers worked with individual students to remediate academic deficiencies and meet learning needs. In many classrooms, students were engaged in small group work. However, that work was not differentiated by individual student abilities or interests.
- Learners transition smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another. During many eleot observations, students did not transition to different activities. In classrooms where transitions occurred, most were accomplished smoothly and efficiently.
- Learners demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work.
- Learners understand and/or explain how their work is assessed.

Quality instruction was evident in many classrooms in the school. One especially noteworthy learning activity that the team observed was initiated collaboratively by teachers in kindergarten and fourth grade. A kindergartener and fourth grader were paired to gather information on an animal of their choice and to share what they had learned by making a diorama that illustrated the animal's habitat and eating preferences. A team member observed one classroom in which the pairs of students were developing a plan for their presentation, deciding on their theme, making a materials list of what would be needed for the diorama, and drawing a sketch of their diorama. In a second grade classroom, students were gathering weather data for the month and illustrating the

data with bar graphs. The students readily responded to the teacher's question, "What can we say about the data?" The teacher of a third grade classroom began a review lesson on fractions by asking students to use hand gestures to indicate how well they were able to solve fraction word problems, put fractions on a number line, separate a shape into fractional parts, and separate a collection into fractional parts. Once students assessed his own abilities in each of these categories, the teacher placed them in groups and began to work with them on his areas of deficiency. The team learned that fourth grade classes had built arcade games just prior to the review. A kindergarten class returned from the playground where they had found a caterpillar. The discussion that followed identified what the caterpillar would need to survive: habitat, water, food, and air. The student set about to provide what was necessary for the caterpillar to live and chose from three names suggested for him. The votes for the name were ranked from least to greatest number; a greedy alligator made a greater than symbol in comparing the greatest number of votes with the least. During the visit with the school principal prior to the review, the team Lead saw kindergarten and first grade students returning to their classrooms from the media center waving banners, signs, and other symbols of the Chinese New Year that they had just studied.

The team agreed that classrooms were well managed, students were engaged and an environment of trust and collaboration was pervasive throughout the school. Students openly engaged in classroom activities including discussions, group work, and individual assignments. There were no significant classroom disruptions noted by the team.

Findings

The chart below provides an overview of the institution ratings across the three Domains.
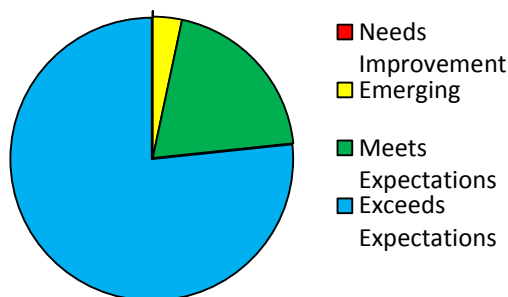
Rating	Number of Standards
Needs Improvement	0
Emerging	1
Meets Expectations	6
Exceeds Expectations	23

Powerful Practices

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

Powerful Practice #1
The school's vision was the focus of all programs implemented, activities planned, and decisions made.

Primary Standard: 1.1

Evidence:
The International Baccalaureate Program (IB) provided the framework for instruction that prepared children to function anyplace in the world. The school board decided to reduce expenditures on administrative staff in order to provide assistant teachers in every classroom in kindergarten and first grade and one assistant teacher for second through fifth grade levels to help meet language and learning barriers. During pre-planning, the principal

hired buses to take staff members on a tour of Clarkston, the home of many of the refugee and immigrant children, to help them understand the challenges and cultures of their students. Teachers received a stipend to visit homes of their students to understand the challenges and to provide ideas about how to structure a nurturing environment in the classroom. The school's vision extended into the home of needy children. Volunteers collected and gave food to 22 needy families every third Wednesday of the month.

Powerful Practice #2
The school used data to inform instruction and decisions regarding operational effectiveness.

Primary Standard: 1.10

Evidence:
The school gathered data on student learning by administering the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) and Fountas and Pinnell reading inventories as well as teacher-made assessments. The principal led data analysis efforts by distributing data from various sources to appropriate stakeholders and meeting with teachers to adjust instruction based on results of the analysis. The principal reported that he adjusted professional development mid-year because of his analysis of various data. At the end of the first full year of implementing data-driven instruction, the school boasted of a 14 point increase on Georgia's College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI).

Powerful Practice #3
The school provided extensive after-school opportunities for students.

Primary Standard: 2.3

Evidence:
After-school activities were designed to give students opportunities that they would not otherwise be able to enjoy, including a soccer program with more than 100 students. Many activities provided girls' programs that would have been prohibited in some of their native countries. The list of activities included art, music, physical education, gymnastics, acrobatics, tennis, African dance, chess, crafts, yoga, and bird-watching. Teachers and parents provided transportation for students to attend athletic events and after-school activities that were hosted off the school site.

Powerful Practice #4
The school provided extensive professional development for staff members.

Primary Standard: 3.1

Evidence:
The school's professional development offerings were determined by the schools vision and purpose as well as by observations of instruction. All new teachers were given in-house training on the International Baccalaureate Program. In their second year of employment, they attended the rigorous International Baccalaureate training. Professional development training was scheduled for all teachers bi-monthly. A mentoring program was established for new or struggling teachers in which they were paired with a master teacher. The master teacher observed their classes, made suggestions for improvement, and model taught lessons.

Opportunities for Improvement

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

Opportunity for Improvement #1

Provide professional development to enable teachers to differentiate instruction for individual students based on performance data.
Primary Standard: 2.1

Evidence:

Learning environment observations indicated that instruction was differentiated in few classrooms. The eleot descriptor, Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs, was rated 2.84. The team noted that many teachers used small group activities and centers to support student learning. However, those activities were the same for all students. Teachers indicated that they used data to inform instruction for their classes, but did not indicate that instruction for individual students was differentiated. The leadership team indicated a need to improve differentiation of instruction, particularly in mathematics.

Improvement Priorities

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

Improvement Priority #1
Develop and implement a plan to use technology to support learning.

Primary Standard: 3.5

Evidence:
Teachers reported that four years ago the school had no technology for instruction. The leadership team indicated that gains were being made in providing technology for student use as funding became available. Currently, each classroom had iPads and seven classrooms had SmartBoards. During eleot observations, few students were using digital devices. Under Resource Management on the School Quality Factors Diagnostic, the school recorded that some learners have appropriate digital, material and other resources to support their learning success. Students, parents, and teachers indicated that the school needed more technology for student use. In the Resource Capacity Domain, the Standard: The institution integrates digital resources into teaching, learning, and operations to improve professional practice, student performance, and organizational effectiveness, was rated as needs improvement.

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

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

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

Institution IEQ	372.86

Conclusion Narrative

The International Community School (ICS) served students in kindergarten through fifth grades from 29 countries who speak 24 languages with a staff that of 15 nationalities who speak 13 languages. The mission of the school was to be an International Baccalaureate World School that educates refugees, immigrants and local children, and provides a rigorous and holistic education in an intentionally diverse community of mutual learners. The school was comprised of approximately 50% immigrant and refugee children and 50% American-born children from the community. Everyone in the school spoke two languages, while some spoke three or four languages. When asked how the school could be better, students responded that they could add another language to the curriculum. The school prided itself on being a "home away from home" for its diverse student and staff population. The school could best be described by three phrases: a joyful place to learn, a focus on mission and vision, and leadership that uses data for continuous improvement.

The principal's opening presentation to the Engagement Review Team began with the statement that ICS is a joyful place. Students described the many events that filled the calendar, including a fall festival complete with "games, foods, and fun!" Teachers used the word "celebrate" to describe the learning environment for diverse students. A United Nations Day provided students the opportunity to celebrate and share their own national heritages with activities peculiar to their own country, including foods, games, displays, and native dances. The celebration of Chinese New Year continued for days with impromptu parades with banners, shakers, balloons, and other paraphernalia used to add excitement. After-school activities were designed to give students opportunities that they would not otherwise be able to enjoy, including a soccer program with more than 100 students participating. Many activities provided girls' programs that would have been prohibited in some of their native countries. The list of activities included art, music, physical education, gymnastics, acrobatics, tennis, African dance, chess, crafts, yoga, and bird-watching. Parents said that the school was a nurturing environment and that the children loved each other. One parent lamented that the students loved school so much that "snow days are sad days at our house." Parents also reported that ICS students do well in middle school because of the great attitudes they develop in the elementary school. The "joyful" atmosphere extended to the library that students described as "book heaven." Students also praised teachers for making them happy and putting a smile on their faces. Smiles and eager faces greeted the team as they observed learning environments and moved throughout the school.

The school's vision was the focus of all programs implemented, activities planned, and decisions made. The school's charter petition was strongly aligned with the mission; its school improvement plan supported the mission, and its Title I Comprehensive School Improvement Plan met the needs of children in a way consistent with the school's vision. The International Baccalaureate Program (IB) provided the framework for instruction that prepared children to function anyplace in the world. Using social studies and science as the center of IB instruction, students were taught using IB strategies in every classroom. In order to accomplish this, all teachers were given in-school training and, after a year at the school, required to attend the intensive IB training. The school successfully petitioned Dekalb County and the Georgia Charter School Commission to allow it to implement a weighted lottery system for admitting students to assure the 50/50 ration between immigrant/refugee and community children in support of its vision. The school board decided to reduce expenditures on administrative staff in order to provide assistant teachers in every classroom in kindergarten and first grade and one assistant

teacher for second through fifth grade levels to help meet language and learning barriers. During pre-planning, the principal hired buses to take staff members on a tour of Clarkston, the home of many of the refugee and immigrant children, to help them understand the challenges and cultures of their students. Teachers received a stipend to visit homes of their students to understand the challenges and to provide ideas about how to structure a nurturing environment in the classroom. Teachers described the student body as unique, saying that at ICS it was normal to be different. They added that getting to know the refugee and immigrant children was a humbling experience that "puts everything else in perspective." They declared that the things "we do here really matter in their (students') future lives.   The school's vision extended into the home of needy children. Volunteers collected and gave food to 22 needy families every third Wednesday of the month. Perhaps the most poignant support for the vision of the school came from a teacher-written compilation of Statements of Understanding:

- We understand that each member of our community (staff, family, and student) is unique and essential to our life together.
- We believe that everyone is inherently able to learn and it is our collective responsibility to nurture the unique genius of every person.
- We believe in educating the whole child – their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, cultural and creative selves. Teaching in a culturally responsive lens, we view socio-emotional development as important as promoting academic excellence.
- We encourage expression through maintaining home languages, fostering fluency in Standard English and offering opportunities to learn other languages.
- We welcome and engage with people of various identity differences including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, faith and political affiliation.
- We are preparing children to be global citizens who take action and work toward social justice in their communities.
- As a beloved community, we approach complex issues with strong communication, collaboration, perspective, respect and active listening.
- I contribute to a legacy, and my voice and actions matter.

The administrative team of the school was comprised of an assistant principal who supported the school's vision and the principal with her expertise and complementary style. She outlined an extensive and precise protocol for providing services to children with special learning challenges. The school had experienced extraordinary turn-over in the principal's position during the past decade and few principals stayed more than one year at the school. Parents said that the success of the school during the multiple shifts in leadership spoke to the strength of the teachers and the community to continue serving students with many leadership changes. A board member expressed the frustration during that period of time, stating that she was yearning for someone who could take the school to the next level. Teachers praised the principal who had been at the school for two years for developing processes and procedures to assure consistency in the instructional program across all grade levels. The principal's implementation of the Balanced Literacy program brought consistency across the school. Professional development meetings occurred bi-weekly that were focused on English Language Arts. The principal declared that the next school year's focus would be mathematics and had planned professional development to prepare his staff to differentiate instruction in mathematics and the principal shared with the team that most professional development activities emanated from classroom observations. He also developed a mentoring system whereby he paired a struggling teacher with a proficient teacher who would observe, model teach, and share strategies for improvement. The program was scheduled for full implementation during the next school year. He began teaching the staff to use data to inform decision-making, especially in adjusting instruction to meet identified needs in individual students. The data wall in his office illustrated growth and work still to be done in student performance. He formalized his leadership team to provide a voice to the staff, stating that better decisions would be made by the group than by himself individually. He routinely collected information on opinions and experiences of all stakeholders of the school. He instituted a formative assessment to gather student performance data three times each year. He hosted data meetings with all classroom teachers regularly to assure they were using data to inform instruction. He brought stability to a school had functioned as a collection of individual decision-makers with little data or consistency. The board praised him for bringing stability, for being a great planner, for keeping them informed on a weekly basis, for instituting a common language for mathematics and language arts instruction, for academic growth in a short period of time, and for building a culture in the

school that promoted staff to work together. One stakeholder group that was a strong advocate for the principal was the student body. In the short period of time that he had served at the school, the principal garnered the support of his students who told the Team that he was a great principal, that he was kind, and that he stood outside to greet them in the mornings and afternoons.

The school was not without challenges. Every stakeholder group indicated that teacher salaries were lower than the local school district, challenging the retention of quality teachers. The lack of sufficient technology was another source of concern for stakeholders. The principal identified the challenge of sustained academic growth in a diverse student body that was very transient. He explained that when immigrant and refugee families became more financially stable, they moved to more affluent communities. The school's strategic plan identified six three-year primary strategic directions:

1. Consistently implement a culturally responsive education approach to support academic growth and development of the whole child and use achievable and documented performance measurements.
2. Promote agreed upon values, priorities and norms that are understood, discussed often and transferable between community members.
3. Re-establish ICS's development department and create the structure to diversify income sources, while continuing to ensure sound financial management practices.
4. Attract, develop and retain stakeholders by creating programming and resources that build long-term capacity and enhance the ICS experience.
5. Create integrated communications systems that provide timely information and actionable engagement opportunities on school issues.
6. Continue refining operations and methods to reflect the ICS mission and maximize efficiency.

The team encouraged the school to maintain its focus on these strategic directions as well as the Engagement Review Report to provide continuous improvement for school that was making a difference in the lives of its children.

Next Steps

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

Upon receiving the Accreditation Engagement Review Report the institution is encouraged to implement the following steps:
- Review and share the findings with stakeholders.
- Develop plans to address the Improvement Priorities identified by the Engagement Review Team.
- Use the findings and data from the report to guide and strengthen the institution's continuous improvement efforts.
- Celebrate the successes noted in the report
- Continue your Improvement Journey

Team Roster

The Engagement Review Teams are comprised of professionals with varied backgrounds and professional experiences. All Lead Evaluators and Engagement Review Team members complete AdvancED training and eleot®

certification to provide knowledge and understanding of the AdvancED tools and processes. The following professionals served on the Engagement Review Team:

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
Dr. Pam Adamson	Dr. Pam Adamson taught mathematics at the junior high and high school levels and served as the district mathematics coordinator and Assistant Superintendent of Instruction in Clayton County Schools. At the Georgia Department of Education she served as the Mathematics Program Specialist and as the Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction. Dr. Adamson was the Headmaster at Mt. Zion Christian Academy and Principal of Strong Rock Middle and High School. She has served on both public and private boards of education. Dr. Adamson was elected to the Clayton County Board of Education in 2008 and has served as Chair of the Clayton County Board of Education since 2010. She has served on or been the Lead Evaluator for SACS/AdvancED External Review Teams for over 20 years. She co-authored a chapter in *A Handbook of Research on School Supervision*. Dr. Adamson has presented at local, state, regional, and national conferences on various mathematics and educational leadership topics. She has conducted mathematics workshops throughout the nation. Dr. Adamson has her Bachelor's, Master's, and Specialist Degrees in Mathematics Education and her Doctorate from the University of Georgia in Education Leadership.
Denise Finley	Denise Finley currently serves as K-8 Curriculum/Learning Support Specialist and MTSS/RTI coordinator for the Lamar County Schools. Mrs. Finley holds a dual Specialist degree (Educational Leadership/Reading-Family Literacy) from Georgia College and State University. She has 29 years of experience as an educator working in a variety of public settings with diverse student populations from birth through high school. She has served in a number of roles as classroom teacher, instructional coach, professional learning consultant and educational curriculum consultant. Her responsibilities and expertise include: systems change efforts, curriculum and instruction, design and evaluation of professional development, coordinating MTSS/RTI process, early childhood and K-12 literacy. She has been a presenter at numerous education conferences including GLISI, Reading First, SSTAGE, Georgia Reading Consortium, and Griffin RESA. Mrs. Finley serves as a board member for Gordon State College School of Education and has been a guest instructor for the Early Childhood program. Denise is an active member of the Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy of Lamar County, SSTAGE, and GACIS. She is the past president of Delta Kappa Gamma -Upsilon -Lamar County Chapter.

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
Jenny Green	Jenny Green has taught mathematics and language arts at the middle school level for 17 years. Over the course of these years, Jenny has taught in a Title 1 Middle School in Newton County, Eagles Landing Christian Academy, and currently at Strong Rock Christian School. At Strong Rock Christian School ,Mrs. Green teaches 6th grade Language Arts and Bible, coaches varsity track, leads an annual high school student mission trip to Honduras, and serves on the Teacher Leadership Team for the Academy and High School. After receiving her Bachelor's of Science Degree from Georgia College and State University, she earned a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Phoenix. Jenny saw a need on a mission trip while in Honduras and Nicaragua in 2014 to aid the teachers and staff at several schools. She travels annually with other professionals to work with the staff of the Good Samaritan schools in Honduras through teacher workshops on best practices and curriculum. Mrs. Green has served as a Standard's Committee Chair, served as a team member on an AdvancED team visit for an elementary school, and attended an AdvancED conference on accreditation.
Dr. Sonja Rice	Dr. Sonja Rice has committed 29 years to teaching and learning which she has taught grades K-7. She has been a Literacy Specialist, Instructional Literacy Coach, and Direct Instruction Supervisor. Currently, she serves as a Reading Specialist and Lead Mentor teacher for the Clayton County Public Schools. She loves working with students and training teachers and spends her extra time teaching educational administration and literacy courses online for various universities. She served on her first review team for AdvancED in 2000. She has her Bachelor's from Valdosta State University; Master's from Fort Valley State University both in Elementary Education; and Specialist from Troy University and Doctorate from Argosy University, both in Education Administration.

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About AdvancED

AdvancED is a non-profit, non-partisan organization serving the largest community of education

professionals in the world. Founded on more than 100 years of work in continuous improvement,

AdvancED combines the knowledge and expertise of a research institute, the skills of a management

consulting firm and the passion of a grassroots movement for educational change to empower

Pre-K-12 schools and school systems to ensure that all learners realize their full potential.