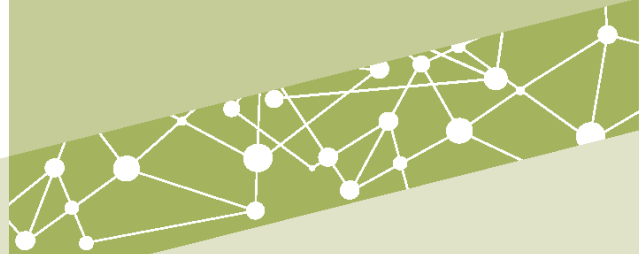**March 4-7, 2018**

AdvancED®
Engagement
Review Report

AdvancED®

AdvancED® Performance Accreditation

» Results for:
Mountain Brook Schools
32 Vine Street
Mountain Brook, Alabama 35213

Table of Contents

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
Board of Education	5
Superintendents	1
Central Office and School Administrators	23
Instructional Staff –Certified Teachers	102
Central Office and School Support Staff	12
Students	51
Parents/Community/Business Leaders	14
Total	**208**

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

Color	Rating	Description
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.	Exceeds Expectations

Continuous Improvement Journey Narrative

Mountain Brook City Schools, located in Mountain Brook, Alabama, had clearly established a commitment to continuous improvement. The Engagement Review Team had abundant and meaningful evidence to inform their ratings for the Commitment to Continuous Improvement Rubric. Furthermore, embedded throughout the provided evidence and system presentations, references were made to recently implemented processes that defined new community-wide initiatives that support Mountain Brook's innovative practices.

In very recent years, the system has revisited the vision, mission, and purpose statements, using broad stakeholder engagement and a Strategic Dialogue format which allowed goals to bubble up organically. Three words prevailed throughout the process: effective—challenging—engagement, which became the existing purpose statement. The system had been addressing 14 goals but felt those were not stretching them. As they met with the community, they asked "What do you want us to be doing in the next ten years?" Mountain Brook also participated in a Capacity Audit which lasted four to six months, with 68 stakeholder participants. These processes resulted in four system-wide goals for the next five years. The Team learned of an on-going forum for stakeholder feedback and engagement, Institute Day, when every Mountain Brook employee, school PTO representatives, city mayor and other officials, and board members have an opportunity to hear the same message regarding the connection between the system's purpose and strategic goals, making this process continuous.

Mountain Brook provided an abundance of data from various AdvancED surveys and inventories, additional survey data and eleot results. The system reported that although much has been communicated with the greater community, they recognize that more can be done in collecting data that would provide explicit perspective and voice from community stakeholders such as local businesses and city officials.

The Engagement Review Team confirmed from presentations and artifacts that Mountain Brook Schools exceed expectations in the capacity to sustain a viable and effective continuous improvement process. The system has a well-established resource for fiscal stability in the Mountain Brook Foundation. Human resources are highly-effective as noted in the hiring of personnel including 104 locally-funded instructional units to support the

system's goals and purpose. Academic excellence was recently enhanced through extensive professional learning opportunities and the establishment of three planning periods per day for instructional staff. Throughout the Review, evidence confirmed the use of meaningful data to drive educational decisions in academics, operations, facilities, and organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, these forms of data were largely systemic, systematic, and sustainable. Data collection and analysis from the business community were noted by the Team as an area for future growth.

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), and 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 system 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 system's purpose and desired outcomes for learners.	Exceeds Expectations
1.3	The system 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 system 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 processes 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 system's purpose and direction.	Exceeds Expectations
1.9	The system 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
1.11	Leaders implement a quality assurance process for its institutions to ensure system effectiveness and consistency.	Exceeds Expectations

Learning Capacity Domain

The impact of teaching and learning is the primary expectation of every system and its institutions. The establishment of a learning culture built on high expectations for learning, along with quality programs and services, which include an analysis of results, are all key indicators of the system's impact on teaching and learning.

Learning Capacity Standards		Rating
2.1	Learners have equitable opportunities to develop skills and achieve the content and learning priorities established by the system.	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 system has a formal structure to ensure learners develop positive relationships with and have adults/peers that 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 system implements a process to ensure the curriculum is aligned to standards and best practices.	Exceeds Expectations
2.7	Instruction is monitored and adjusted to meet individual learners' needs and the system's learning expectations.	Exceeds Expectations
2.8	The system provides programs and services for learners' educational future and career planning.	Exceeds Expectations
2.9	The system implements processes to identify and address the specialized needs of learners.	Exceeds Expectations
2.10	Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.	Exceeds Expectations
2.11	Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to demonstrable improvement of student learning.	Exceeds Expectations
2.12	The system implements a process to continuously assess its programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning.	Meets Expectations

Resource Capacity Domain

The use and distribution of resources align and support the needs of the system and institutions served. Systems ensure that resources are aligned with its stated purpose and direction and distributed equitably so that the needs of the system are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes support for professional learning for all staff. The system examines the allocation and use of resources to ensure appropriate levels of funding, sustainability, and system effectiveness.

Resource Capacity Standards		Rating
3.1	The system plans and delivers professional learning to improve the learning environment, learner achievement, and the system's effectiveness.	Exceeds Expectations
3.2	The system's professional learning structure and expectations promote collaboration and collegiality to improve learner performance and organizational effectiveness.	Exceeds Expectations
3.3	The system 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

Resource Capacity Standards		Rating
3.4	The system attracts and retains qualified personnel who support the system's purpose and direction.	Exceeds Expectations
3.5	The system integrates digital resources into teaching, learning, and operations to improve professional practice, student performance, and organizational effectiveness.	Exceeds Expectations
3.6	The system provides access to information resources and materials to support the curriculum, programs, and needs of students, staff, and the system.	Exceeds Expectations
3.7	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning and use of resources in support of the system's purpose and direction.	Exceeds Expectations
3.8	The system allocates human, material, and fiscal resources in alignment with the system'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	**49**
Environments	**Rating**
Equitable Learning Environment	3.09
Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs	2.39
Learners have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	4.00
Learners are treated in a fair, clear and consistent manner	4.00
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	1.98
High Expectations Environment	3.49
Learners strive to meet or are able to articulate the high expectations established by themselves and/or the teacher	3.71
Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	3.61
Learners demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work	3.45
Learners engage in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks that require the use of higher order thinking (e.g., analyzing, applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	3.18
Learners take responsibility for and are self-directed in their learning	3.51
Supportive Learning Environment	3.80
Learners demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful	3.88
Learners take risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	3.69
Learners are supported by the teacher, their peers and/or other resources to understand content and accomplish tasks	3.80
Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher	3.82

eleot® Observations	
Total Number of eleot® Observations	**49**
Environments	**Rating**
Active Learning Environment	3.08
Learners' discussions/dialogues/exchanges with each other and the teacher predominate	3.55
Learners make connections from content to real-life experiences	2.33
Learners are actively engaged in the learning activities	3.73
Learners collaborate with their peers to accomplish/complete projects, activities, tasks and/or assignments	2.71
Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment	3.23
Learners monitor their own learning progress or have mechanisms whereby their learning progress is monitored	2.88
Learners receive/respond to feedback (from teachers/peers/other resources) to improve understanding and/or revise work	3.53
Learners demonstrate and/or verbalize understanding of the lesson/content	3.67
Learners understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed	2.84
Well-Managed Learning Environment	3.83
Learners speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other	3.96
Learners demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others	3.96
Learners transition smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another	3.57
Learners use class time purposefully with minimal wasted time or disruptions	3.82
Digital Learning Environment	1.78
Learners use digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	2.06
Learners use digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	1.78
Learners use digital tools/technology to communicate and/or work collaboratively for Learning	1.49

eleot® Narrative

The Engagement Review Team conducted 49 classroom observations using the student-centric *eProve* Effective Learning Observation Tool ® (eleot®) during the onsite Engagement Review. The Team visited all schools and observed all grade levels and most content areas. The overall rating from the 49 observations was 3.25 on a four-point scale. The Well-Managed Learning Environment (3.83) and Supportive Learning Environment (3.80) were the highest rated environments. Digital Learning Environment (1.78) received the lowest rating.

The pervasive excellence of the learning environment in Mountain Brook Schools was highly evident throughout the 49 observations. Well-Managed Learning Environment ratings of 3.96 for "Learners speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other" and "Learners demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others" set the foundation for optimal learning conditions. These learning conditions were equally evident in the Supportive Learning Environment, allowing instruction to be varied from lab settings to small group project activities.

In Mountain Brook, high expectations have been the norm for everyone. The Team noted that students were consistently focused on meeting the high expectations established by themselves or their teachers. This was evident in an energized third grade math class engaged in using patterns and manipulatives to learn about the use of parentheses. High level student responses drove other students to think critically and mentally come up with more "efficient" ways to respond, which elevated the lesson to a higher level.

Teacher feedback was prevalent throughout the observation, with students responding to the feedback they received from teachers and peers. Peer evaluations were being employed in a second-grade classroom where students had a learning partner and brainstorming partner and were engaged in a social studies biography project. In many classes, however, students did not understand how their work was to be graded nor did they have observable mechanisms for monitoring their learning progress during the observations.

The Equitable Learning Environment (3.09) and Active Learning Environment (3.08) became indicators for opportunities for growth and continuous improvement. "Learners have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support" and "Learners are treated in a fair, clear and consistent manner" both garnered ratings of 4.0 by all five evaluators in the 49 observations.   However, team members found limited differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet the needs of every student nor was there consistent evidence where students demonstrated opportunities within the observation time to experiences and appreciation for differences in abilities, backgrounds, culture, and other human conditions. These environments provided robust discussions and team deliberations. Based on the system's goals and desires to personalize the learning experiences of their students (student voice) and re-invent ways for their students to experience diversity, the Improvement Priority was rooted in these environments. From team discussions, some highly engaged learning did exist such as a fourth-grade science class that was a part of an Innovation Grant the teacher had received. Students were working in groups to design a house boat with three rooms using Tinkercad to ultimately produce a 3-D model. Students were learning through critical details and then having to correct their work to meet the criteria of space and components. They were assisted by the science teacher and the literacy coach who were the "guides by the side" – letting students learn through experiencing what works and what needs more thought. Student engagement and differentiation were found in fewer classes, suggesting this was an area for growth. The highest digital rating was in "Learners use digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning" (2.06) with limited observation of other digital indicators.

In conclusion, as the system designs and implements its plans to develop student voice and diversity models, there will be greater alignment with student learning that meets the high learning needs of the Mountain Brook Schools' student population. Early steps were noted such as sixth grade students being invited to attend a planning session if they chose to do so. This was going to include teacher/student discussions about what content would be taught in an upcoming space unit, what activities students would like to encounter, and how those activities would be designed. Mountain Brook has the capacity, material and human resources, as well as the pedagogy for advanced levels of student engagement.

Findings

The chart below provides an overview of the institution ratings across the three Domains.
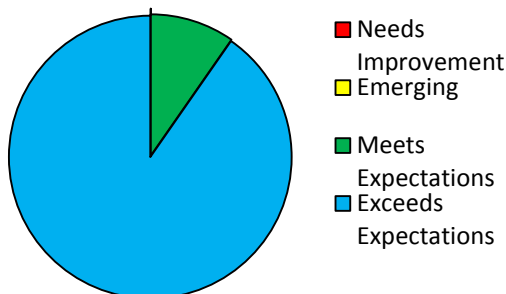
Rating	Number of Standards
Needs Improvement	0
Emerging	0
Meets Expectations	3
Exceeds Expectations	28

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 system commits to a purpose that defines beliefs about teaching and learning and engages all stakeholders to support the fulfillment of that purpose. (Standard 1.1, 1.8)

Primary Standard: 1.1

Evidence:

The Engagement Review Team analyzed evidence and conducted interviews to evaluate the development and articulation of the system's purpose. Additionally, the Team examined the procedures and practices that supported the implementation and fulfillment of the purpose, as well as the engagement of all stakeholders in the support of the purpose. System leadership convened groups of teachers, administrators, parents, and students to engage in Strategic Dialogue about the direction of the system. In May of 2017, the system adopted four strategic goals that include detailed descriptions of their status with respect to those goals and specific behaviors and structures that need to change. Moreover, this process has allowed the system to articulate "11 Things We Want People to Say About Our Schools." This documentation of the system's values provides a more robust expression of the enduring commitment to fulfilling their purpose. Through an examination of the evidence, interviews with stakeholders, and visits to the schools; it was apparent that the system does an exemplary job of engaging all stakeholders in developing and supporting the purpose. Furthermore, the defined structure and support of Professional Learning Communities throughout the system ensures a comprehensive and consistent fulfillment of the system's purpose.

Powerful Practice #2

The system's learning culture has created a commitment to the education of students with special needs as well as integration of the special needs population with students, staff, and community. (Standard 2.3)

Primary Standard:
2.3

Evidence:

The Engagement Review Team interviewed students, parents, and staff and visited schools to explore the system's learning culture as well as learner's attitudes, beliefs, and skills. It was evident that the programs for students with special needs were extremely powerful. Many parents have made significant financial sacrifices to enroll these students in Mountain Brook Schools. At the high school, the Circle of Friends has created opportunities for students with special needs to be matched with typical peers. As a result, several of these peers have chosen to pursue careers in Special Education. The system was working with Samford University to allow some students with special needs to engage in a post-secondary experience along with their typical peers with whom they have attended school for many years. Both secondary schools have established Collaborative classes, co-taught by a general education and a special education teacher with a behavior specialist as needed. In these classes, carefully selected students with special needs comprise half of the class membership; typical students were then randomly assigned to the classes to complete the roster. The Engagement Review Team observed the integration of students with special needs with typical peers at every school. Additionally, this model has attracted other school systems to become a part of the initiative.

Powerful Practice #3
Mountain Brook Schools plans and delivers a professional learning structure by setting high expectations that promote collaboration and collegiality to improve learner performance and organizational effectiveness for all system personnel. (Standard 3.1, 3.2)

Primary Standard:
3.1

Evidence:
The system used a collaborative and collegial model of professional learning to improve the learning environment, student achievement, and the system's effectiveness. The Engagement Review Team examined artifacts, conducted interviews, and observed classes to gain knowledge of the system's professional learning structure and subsequent impact on the learning environment, student achievement, and organizational effectiveness.
The Team found that professional learning was aligned with system goals. For example, the Director of Instruction engaged teachers in professional learning to investigate student voice as an avenue for increasing student engagement. School teams then produced an action plan to address the needs of their respective schools and teachers.

The Team found the formation of PLCs at the system and school levels to be instrumental in ongoing professional learning, application of learning to improve student achievement, and subsequent data collection to adjust instruction where needed.

Mountain Brook Schools offered a Summer Learning Conference and EdCamp with school system faculty as presenters, in addition to presenters from outside sources. The school system allowed educators from outside systems to attend these professional learning opportunities free of charge. Mountain Brook's Institute for Innovation provided another avenue for professional learning and encouraged system personnel to apply for the opportunity to present and implement their innovative ideas to enhance student learning. The system also brought nationally-recognized speakers to the employees and sends educators to national conferences.

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
Clarify, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive program to ensure that learners have equitable and personalized opportunities to develop skills and achieve the learning priorities established by the system. (Standard 2.1)

Primary Standard:
2.1

Evidence:
Among the lowest scoring items on the Student Culture Survey at Mountain Brook High School were those that addressed working on real life problems and personalized learning opportunities. The eleot® ratings, although very strong overall, identified a weakness relative to differentiated instruction. The system engaged in an extensive Strategic Dialogue that involved all stakeholders including students. The highest priority goal that derived from that dialogue was: "Develop throughout the school system a clear focus on students and on how amplifying student voice results in deeper engagement and learning." This suggests that the system has already identified the need for stronger student voice to enhance individualized learning opportunities and experiences.

Written evidence, the superintendent's presentation, and interviews with stakeholders revealed that Mountain Brook has initiated a system-wide program of professional development to educate stakeholders and identify parameters for defining and evaluating engagement as a result of the increased focus on student voice.

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	382.98

Conclusion Narrative

Mountain Brook City Schools is comprised of four elementary schools, one junior high school and one senior high school. The school community has a strong, established caring culture of highly-qualified personnel, high-performing students, and engaged parents and community stakeholders, who set high expectations for all. The system has a long history of excellence and was known for its innovative approach to learning. As one educator shared with a team member, "Everything here is cohesive. When you are surrounded by superstars, you want to be even better than you are." Leadership articulated a vision for the future based on a reflection from four years ago when the system began to transition from the practice of looking at achievement test scores to a focus on individual students. As the superintendent described that mind-shift, he said it was "putting a face to data" which has culminated in an initiative to establish one of the four goals as exploring the power and connection of student voice to personalize achievement. As the Engagement Review Team examined meaningful evidence and data, it became clear that Mountain Brook Schools wanted to expand their work with students to an innovative level that challenged their students and educators to perform at even higher levels.

When the Engagement Review Team visited 49 classrooms, differentiated student engagement was evident in some classrooms but was not systemic during those observations. Also, the use of technology by students was observed at a basic level of researching topics for information rather than higher levels of technology integration, exploration, collaboration, and communication. While one team member observed a class that was designing an App for concussions, similar student use of technology was not systemic. Mountain Brook students were poised for those higher levels of student inquiry and problem solving. The findings for some items in the Equitable Learning Environment and the Digital Learning Environment substantiated an area for growth in personalizing the learning experiences for every student. The system's strategic goal that focuses on student voice can provide the landscape for this improvement priority. Based on rich evidence of the approaches that have been used in Mountain Brook to bring about changes in learning, the Team believed that innovation-minded leaders and committed educators will successfully establish student voice as a model for engaging and personalizing learning outcomes for all students.

Throughout the Review, team members heard discussions regarding the desire to enhance current pathways of communication, particularly with the business community and local city officials. The Team supports that process for Mountain Brook has so many outstanding programs and successes to communicate. Centralizing a consistent, coherent message to the local community and beyond will enable the system to be a catalyst for continuous school

improvement, innovation, and community support for Mountain Brook and other systems as well.

The Team noted two areas related to documentation and evaluation that were in progress. While each school could respond that they know their students and have ways of supporting them, documented processes for each student to be assigned an adult advocate have been started and needed to be completed. The Team acknowledged that Mountain Brook High School had assigned persons to students; however, some of the criteria the Team had to rate to measure this process could not be validated. Likewise, Mountain Brook spoke of various program evaluation practices, but there is a need to document for evaluation and replication. Finally, the Team commended the work of the highly-effective governing body. From board interviews and poll responses, it became evident that the board has not established a practice of annual self-evaluation for growth as individuals and as a governing body. Board members embraced the idea as one that would be beneficial to their work.

Effective…Challenging…Engaging…the three cornerstones to Mountain Brook Schools' recognition of excellence among some of the highest performing school systems in the nation, were solid indicators for continuous improvement and success for all students. Mountain Brook strategically determined the practices to pursue and to build upon. The Team found evidence of such practices from 20 years ago that were still fundamentally sound in current system procedures and processes. There was a theme of researching Best Practices, providing nationally-recognized training, and then making sound decisions to support the teachers in implementation, such as providing three planning periods each day for collaboration, data analysis, and instructional planning. They made financial decisions that lead to both successful practices and the acquisition of desired outcomes.

Innovative leadership, a clearly-defined purpose, supportive community stakeholders, effective and caring educators, fiscal stability, a collaborative culture, and laser-like focus on student voice are factors that contribute to establishing schools of excellence. Those qualities were at the core of daily operational excellence across Mountain Brook's schools. The desire to be a world-class school system was driven by that daily operational excellence. The future was bright and optimistic for students who are fortunate to receive a rich and vibrant education in the Mountain Brook School System. It was a place where dreams become reality through a lens of infinite possibilities.

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

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
Mary Anne Hipp, Lead Evaluator	Mary Anne Hipp has committed her education career to teaching and learning, having served as a Kindergarten and elementary classroom teacher both in public and private education, as well as an elementary principal for a combined 51 years. Her passion for excellence and continuous improvement has been the driving force of her service as an AdvancED System Lead Evaluator for the past nine years, serving public school systems, faith-based systems, Catholic Dioceses, and Education Service Agencies across America and in Latin America. She holds degrees and certifications in Music Education, Kindergarten, Elementary Education and has a Masters + 30 Degree in Education Administration. In addition to accreditation work, Ms. Hipp has served on various community, civic, and education boards in the United States and Latin America and currently serves as a consultant for School Board Development.
Dr. Martha LaCroix, Associate Lead Evaluator	Dr. Martha LaCroix invested over three decades in Alabama public education, serving as a district-wide Director of Accountability Programs, a high school Assistant Principal of Instruction, and a high school English teacher. She has extensive experience in assessment, accountability, curriculum, teacher evaluation, classroom management, and human resources. She has provided leadership and service in both internal and external AdvancED/SACS accreditation activities since the early 1980's. Dr. LaCroix currently serves on the AdvancED Alabama Council. She is a lead evaluator for school review teams, associate lead evaluator for district review teams, and team member for both district and school review teams. Dr. LaCroix holds B.S. and M.A. degrees in secondary education with a content major in English from The University of Alabama; an Ed.S. in educational leadership from The University of Alabama at Birmingham; and the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree in educational leadership and curriculum from The University of Alabama/UAB joint doctoral program. She was certified as a trainer through Vanderbilt University's COMP (Classroom Organization and Management Program) project and served as an adjunct instructor for The University of Alabama at Birmingham.
Dr. Danny Steele	Danny Steele is in his 25th year of public education, and the 2017-2018 school year marks his fourth year as the principal of Thompson Sixth Grade Center in the Alabaster City School System. Prior to this position, he served as a high school principal for three years, as an assistant principal for ten years, and as a teacher and coach for eight years. In 2005, Steele was recognized as the "Secondary Assistant Principal of the Year" for the state of Alabama, and he was recognized in 2016 as Alabama's "Secondary Principal of the Year." He has presented at numerous state and national conferences. In addition to maintaining a robust professional learning network on Twitter, Steele writes an educational leadership blog that has received close to three million page views, and he is currently writing a book with Todd Whitaker (to be published by ASCD.) He has served on several AdvancED Review Teams, and he participated in Alabama's Superintendent's Academy in 2014. Steele has an undergraduate degree in History from Covenant College (Lookout Mountain, GA); he has an M.A. in History from the University of Alabama, Birmingham; he has an Educational Specialist degree in Educational Administration and an Educational Doctorate degree in Educational Leadership – both from Samford University. He resides with his wife and three children in Birmingham, Alabama.

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
Mary Virginia (M.V.) Wendell	Mary Virginia Wendell is a retired Speech/Language Pathologist who served as a district Exceptional Student Education Reading Specialist and Title I Specialist for the 36,000 student School District of Clay County Florida. In those positions she was responsible for implementing reading instruction for special needs students in the 41 district schools including professional development and evaluation of instructional outcomes, as well as developing instruction and assessment strategies for students in Title I schools. Mrs. Wendell holds a Master's Degree from the University of Cincinnati and has K-12 classroom experience in addition to extensive experience in professional development for teachers and administrators. She served on the AdvancEd Team for Clay County and has served on several AdvancEd Engagement Reviews in four states.
Alma Huston	Alma Huston has been in education for 38 years in both public and private settings. She began as an elementary teacher and has been a high school teacher, dean of students, high school principal and director of counseling and student services. She holds a Master's in Educational Psychology and Counseling and another in Administration as well as additional hours in early childhood. She began serving for AdvancEd in the early 90's and began as a lead in 1999, serving every year since then. She is currently retired but occasionally does college and career counseling as a consultant.

AdvancED®

advanc-ed.org

Toll Free: 888.41EDNOW (888.413.3669)   Global: +1 678.392.2285, ext. 6963

9115 Westside Parkway, Alpharetta, GA 30009

f   🐦   ▶️

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.