Self Assessment

Dawson County School System

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Introduction

AdvancED's Self Assessment (SA) diagnostic is based on the AdvancED Standards of Quality, which serves as the foundation of the accreditation and continuous improvement process. The SA is a valuable tool for collaboratively engaging staff members and stakeholders in purposeful, honest dialogue and reflection to assess the institution's adherence to the Standards, and guide its continuous improvement efforts. The SA includes the institution's self-ratings of and the evidence cited for each of the indicators, comments that explain the indicator's ratings and an overall narrative for each Standard. The results of the SA are reviewed by the External Review Team as one essential component of the preparation process for the institution's External Review.
Purpose and Direction

The system maintains and communicates at all levels of the organization a purpose and direction for continuous improvement that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.

Overall Rating: 4.0

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<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>The system engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a system-wide purpose for student success.</td>
<td>The process for review, revision, and communication of the system's purpose is clearly documented, and a record of the use and results of the process is maintained. The process is formalized and implemented with fidelity on a regular schedule. The process includes participation by representatives selected at random from all stakeholder groups. The purpose statement clearly focuses on student success.</td>
<td>•District purpose statements - past and present •Documentation or description of the process for creating the district's purpose including the role of stakeholders •Examples of communications to stakeholders about the district's purpose (i.e. website, newsletters, annual report, student handbook) •Minutes from meetings related to development of the district's purpose and direction •Copy of strategic plan referencing the district's purpose and direction and its effectiveness •Communication plan to stakeholders regarding the district's purpose</td>
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<td>1.2</td>
<td>The system ensures that each school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.</td>
<td>System policies and procedures clearly outline the expectations for schools regarding a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process for review, revision, and communication of a purpose for student success. System personnel monitor and maintain data about each school and provide feedback and training for the improvement of the implementation of the process to school personnel.</td>
<td>•Agendas and/or minutes that reference a commitment to the components of the schools' purpose statements •Examples of school purpose statements if different from the district purpose statement •Examples of written stakeholder communications or marketing materials that portray the school purpose and direction</td>
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### Indicator 1.3

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

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<td>Commitment to shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning is clearly evident in documentation and decision making. This commitment is always reflected in communication among leaders and staff. Challenging educational programs and equitable learning experiences are implemented in a measurable way so that all students achieve learning, thinking, and life skills necessary for success. Evidence indicates a strong commitment to instructional practices that include active student engagement, a focus on depth of understanding, and the application of knowledge and skills. System leadership and staff hold one another accountable to high expectations for professional practice.</td>
<td>• Communication plan and artifacts that show two-way communication to staff and stakeholders about educational programs and equitable learning experiences • Examples of schools' continuous improvement plans • Statements or documents about ethical and professional practices • Professional development plans and implementation timelines on topics related to equity, organizational effectiveness, and improved instruction and programs • Statements of shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning</td>
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### Indicator 1.4

Leadership at all levels of the system implement a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.

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<td>Leaders at all levels of the system require the use of a documented, systematic continuous improvement process for improving student learning and the conditions that support learning. All stakeholder groups work collaboratively and consistently in authentic and meaningful ways that build and sustain ownership of the system's purpose and direction. Personnel systematically maintain, use, and communicate a profile with current and comprehensive data on student, school, and system performance. The profile contains thorough analyses of a broad range of data used to identify goals for the improvement of conditions that support student learning and that are aligned with the system's purpose. All improvement goals have measurable performance targets. The process includes action planning that identifies measurable objectives, strategies, activities, resources, and timelines for achieving all improvement goals. System personnel hold one another accountable for and evaluate the overall quality of the implementation of all interventions and strategies. The process is reviewed and evaluated regularly. Documentation that the process is implemented with fidelity and yields improved student achievement and conditions that support student learning is available and communicated to stakeholders.</td>
<td>• Examples of schools' continuous improvement plans • District Quality Assurance Review plans that document two-way communication on district and school effectiveness and learning, thinking, and life skills • Professional development plans and implementation timelines on topics related to equity, organizational effectiveness, and improved instruction and programs • Agenda, minutes from continuous improvement planning meetings • Communication plan and artifacts that show two-way communication to staff and stakeholders • The district data profile • The district strategic plan</td>
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Reflect upon your responses to each of the indicators and performance levels by considering and responding to the following questions when drafting your narrative response. Use language from the performance level descriptions to guide your writing. Cite sources of evidence the External Review team members may be interested in reviewing.
AREAS OF STRENGTH

The Dawson County School System uses a systematic approach to review and update its purpose and direction every five years. During the comprehensive review, district and community stakeholders ensure the district purpose statement clearly focuses on student success, the direction statement focuses on the steps to achieve the purpose, and the commitment statements affirm the district beliefs about values about teaching and learning. The updated purpose, direction, and commitment statements provide the foundation for additional systemic planning for system and school level improvement. The initiatives and strategies of the system strategic plan and school improvement plans are all developed in alignment with Dawson County's purpose, direction, and commitment statements.

Schools follow the same review process as the district in the development of their respective purpose and direction statements. Most of the schools adopt the district statement as their own. A few of the schools use the system statement as their foundation and then add a few customizations to fit the needs of their particular school.

The purpose, direction, and commitment statements are shared with stakeholders in a variety of mediums. Large poster-sized versions of the document are placed in every district building. Additionally, the statement is posted on the district website and is communicated at stakeholder meetings. Just like the school district, the individual school statements are posted throughout the school building, on the school website, in the school handbooks, and shared at stakeholder meetings.

The system and schools hold one another accountable through quarterly reporting sessions. During these sessions, schools and the school district report on the progress of implementing the school and system improvement plans, which were developed in alignment with the purpose and direction statements. The system provides progress updates to the board of education at monthly meetings and retreat sessions. Updates are also provided to the system governance council, parent cabinet, and teacher forum. At the school level, updates are provided to the governance council, PTO, and faculty meetings.

ACTIONS TO SUSTAIN STRENGTHS

Quarterly monitoring meetings along with monthly administrative leadership team meetings reinforce the work of the schools and the school district in maintaining a focus on student success and quality instructional programs. Regular technical assistance and professional development sessions with individual programs further assist the system and schools with implementing a quality instructional program.

AREAS IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT AND PLANS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school system has an effective plan of review and implementation in place for its purpose, direction, and commitment statements. Improvement efforts include the involvement of more stakeholders in the evaluative and feedback process. Providing more than one opportunity for the community at large meeting, such as the ability to respond via online, and also including higher education representatives from the district Professional Development School partners.
Governance and Leadership

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

Overall Rating: 4.0

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| 2.1       | The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools.                                                                                     | Policies and practices clearly and directly support the system's purpose and direction and the effective operation of the system and its schools. Policies and practices require and have mechanisms in place for monitoring conditions that support student learning, effective instruction, and assessment that produce equitable and challenging learning experiences for all students. There are policies and practices requiring and giving direction for professional growth of all staff. Policies and practices provide clear requirements, direction for, and oversight of fiscal management at all levels of the system. | • Professional development plans  
• Student handbooks  
• Governing body policies, procedures, and practices  
• Staff handbooks  
• District operations manuals  
• Communications to stakeholder about policy revisions  
• School handbooks  
• Charter System Governance Council Meetings and Training                                                                 | Level 4                                                                                                                             |
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<td>2.2</td>
<td>The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.</td>
<td>The governing body has implemented a process to evaluate its decisions and actions to ensure they are in accordance with defined roles and responsibilities, a formally adopted code of ethics, and free of conflict of interest. Governing body members are required to participate in a systematic, formal professional development process regarding the roles and responsibilities of the governing body and its individual members. The professional development curriculum also includes conflict resolution, decision-making, supervision and evaluation, and fiscal responsibility. Members comply with all policies, procedures, laws, and regulations and function as a cohesive unit for the benefit of effective system operation and student learning.</td>
<td>• Governing authority minutes relating to training • Communication plan to inform all staff on code of ethics, responsibilities, conflict of interest • List of assigned staff for compliance • Proof of legal counsel • Governing authority training plan • Assurances, certifications • Findings of internal and external reviews of compliance with laws, regulations, and policies • Historical compliance data • Governing authority policies on roles and responsibilities, conflict of interest • Governing code of ethics • Charter System Governance Training District Level Department Audits, Awards, Recognitions</td>
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| 2.3       | The governing body ensures that the leadership at all levels has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.                        | The governing body consistently protects, supports, and respects the autonomy of system and school leadership to accomplish goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations of the system and its schools. The governing body maintains a clear distinction between its roles and responsibilities and those of system and school leadership. | • Communications regarding governing authority actions  
• District strategic plan  
• Examples of school improvement plans  
• Roles and responsibilities of school leadership  
• Roles and responsibilities of district leadership  
• Social media  
• Survey results regarding functions of the governing authority and operations of the district  
• Stakeholder input and feedback  
• Maintenance of consistent academic oversight, planning, and resource allocation  
• Agendas and minutes of meetings | Level 4 |
| 2.4       | Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction.                                                                                     | Leaders and staff throughout the system deliberately and consistently align their decisions and actions toward continuous improvement to achieve the system's purpose. They encourage, support, and expect all personnel to maintain high standards and to hold students to high standards in all courses of study. All stakeholders are collectively accountable for maintaining and improving conditions that support student learning. Leaders throughout the system actively and consistently support and encourage innovation, collaboration, shared leadership, and rigorous professional growth. The culture is characterized by collaboration and a sense of community among all stakeholders. | • Examples of decisions aligned with the district's strategic plan  
• Professional development offerings and plans  
• Examples of collaboration and shared leadership  
• Examples of decisions aligned with the school's purpose statement  
• Survey results  
• Examples of decisions in support of the schools' continuous improvement plans  
• Examples of improvement efforts and innovations in the educational programs  
• Examples of decisions aligned with the district's purpose and direction  
• Charter System Mini Grant Opportunities | Level 4 |
Reflect upon your responses to each of the indicators and performance levels by considering and responding to the following questions when drafting your narrative response. Use language from the performance level descriptions to guide your writing. Cite sources of evidence the External Review team members may be interested in reviewing.

The Dawson County Board of Education is comprised of five members who are elected according to four geographic areas as well as one member at large. The primary focus of the Board is the best interest of the students while ensuring efficient operation of the school system and maintaining the fiscal and legal soundness of the system. In recognition of their commitment to fiscal responsibility, Dawson County Schools has received the Award of Distinction for Excellent Financial Reporting in 2014 and 2015. This award was put in place by the State Department of Audits and Accounts as a means to recognize organizations that go above and beyond the minimum requirements of generally accepted accounting principals. The district Financial Department was free of any significant deficiencies or material weaknesses.

The Dawson Board of Education has policies and procedures in place to ensure effective administration of the system and its schools. These policies support student learning, effective instruction, and informative assessments that provide a challenging learning experience for all students. To that end, any policy revisions sit for 30 days to allow for public input before the board votes on any changes.
The Dawson County Board of Education participates in two retreats per year in order to review budgetary matters to ensure that there is a direction for and oversight of the fiscal management at all levels. Pioneer Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) representatives attend these retreats and help the Board with data and trend data evaluation. The evaluation of the data includes reports from all the principals and departments within the Central Office. The Board holds meeting on the second Monday of the month at 6:30 pm. Open to the public, these meeting allow time for citizen comments.

In addition to the Board, the System Governance Council is comprised of principals, parents, and community stakeholders from each school and the chairman of each school governance council meets three times a year to provide input into system wide decisions.

AREAS OF STRENGTH
Indicators 2.3, 2.6

The Board ensures that the leadership at all levels has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.

Each school maintains a School Improvement Plan (SIP) that is driven by stakeholder input. The SIP is reviewed on a regular basis, and all stakeholders participate in the review. Other areas of strength include the use of an evaluation process that results in improved professional practices and continued student success. Schools use the TKES/LKES evaluation tools to monitor and adjust professional practices to ensure student learning. The Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards (GAPSS) is used as a school-level self-study. This assessment drives school SIPS and professional learning. Data from the GAPSS is used to identify areas of teacher weakness in an effort to improve student success.

ACTIONS TO SUSTAIN STRENGTHS

The system leadership team engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction. This is achieved by soliciting feedback from stakeholders to help shape decisions at both the school level and the system level. Feedback is solicited through a variety of means: survey results, PTO meetings, and School Governance Council meetings. Monthly System Leadership Team meetings are held at the Central Office. At these meeting building level administrators and district level personnel discuss policies, procedures, data, management, and daily operations of the system.

At the school level and the system level, leaders consistently communicate with the various stakeholders through various social media outlets such as Twitter, Facebook, email, Remind 101, and the system and school websites. Schools will continue to use the TKES Performance Standards and Rubrics to evaluate professional practices that impact student success. In addition, the system designates days throughout the school year for Professional Development. Based upon their needs, individual schools determine what Professional Development topics are best suited for the needs of the faculty and staff. Beginning in the Fall of 2015, the system began implementing Classworks as a way to assess student progress in order to identify individual student areas of strength and weakness. District wide Professional Development helps to facilitate the implementation of Classworks.

AREAS IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT
Indicators 2.4

While all indicators in this standard rate a four, there are areas to improve upon. One indicator identified as an area to improve upon is to continue to foster a culture that is consistent with the system's purpose and direction (2.4). The system's direction is to provide quality
instruction and student support in a nurturing environment that results in success for all. To that end the system is committed to taking advantage of emerging technology and innovations. In the discussion stage is a plan to implement 1:1 technology device for students.

PLANS FOR IMPROVEMENT

To support the system's commitment to implement a 1:1 technology plan, future ESPLOST funds have been earmarked. The Executive Director of Technology will be responsible for the research, implementation, and roll out of the 1:1 student devices. The system plans to have a device in every student's hand by FY17. Dawson County has added the positions of Executive Director of Technology and part-time Coordinator of Instructional Technology. The addition of Coordinator of Academic Innovation will provide curriculum support at all levels K-12. In this role, the Coordinator will look at data to ensure that Dawson County Schools are providing quality instruction and student support so that all students may succeed.
Teaching and Assessing for Learning

The system's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning across all grades and courses.

Overall Rating: 3.42

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| 3.1       | The system's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at the next level. | Curriculum and learning experiences in each course/class throughout the system provide all students with challenging and equitable opportunities to develop learning skills, thinking skills, and life skills that align with the system's and school's purpose. Evidence clearly indicates curriculum and learning experiences prepare students for success at the next level. Like courses/classes have the same high learning expectations across the system. Teachers in all schools individualize learning activities for each student in a way that supports achievement of expectations. | • Learning expectations for different courses and programs  
• Course, program, or school schedules  
• Student work across courses or programs  
• Course or program descriptions  
• Lesson plans  
• Teacher evaluation criteria relating to prescribed instructional designs and proprietary practices  
• Posted learning objectives  
• Enrollment patterns for various courses and programs  
• Descriptions of instructional techniques | Level 4   |
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| 3.2       | Curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout the system are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice. | Using data from student assessments and an examination of professional practice, system and school personnel monitor and adjust curriculum, instruction, and assessment to ensure vertical and horizontal alignment and alignment with goals for achievement and instruction and statements of purpose. There is a process in place to ensure alignment each time curriculum, instruction, and/or assessments are reviewed or revised at the system or school level. The continuous improvement process ensures that vertical and horizontal alignment as well as alignment with the system's purpose are maintained and enhanced in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. | • Curriculum guides  
• A description of the systematic review process for curriculum, instruction, and assessment  
• Common assessments  
• Standards-based report cards  
• Surveys results  
• Program descriptions  
• Teacher evaluation criteria relating to prescribed instructional designs and proprietary practices  
• Curriculum writing process  
• Products – scope and sequence, curriculum maps  
• Lesson plans aligned to the curriculum | Level 3 |
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<td>3.3</td>
<td>Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.</td>
<td>Teachers throughout the district are consistent and deliberate in planning and using instructional strategies that require student collaboration, self-reflection, and development of critical thinking skills. Teachers personalize instructional strategies and interventions to address individual learning needs of each student. Teachers consistently use instructional strategies that require students to apply knowledge and skills, integrate content and skills with other disciplines, and use technologies as instructional resources and learning tools.</td>
<td>• Examples of professional development offerings and plans tied specifically to the results from supervision and evaluation&lt;br&gt;• Authentic assessments&lt;br&gt;• Examples of teacher use of technology as an instructional resource&lt;br&gt;• Findings from supervisor formal and informal observations&lt;br&gt;• Examples of student use of technology as a learning tool&lt;br&gt;• Student work demonstrating the application of knowledge&lt;br&gt;• Surveys results&lt;br&gt;• Examples of professional development offerings and plans tied specifically to the approved or prescribed instructional strategies and programs&lt;br&gt;• Teacher evaluation criteria relating to prescribed instructional designs and proprietary practices</td>
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| 3.4       | System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success. | System and school leaders formally and consistently monitor instructional practices through supervision and evaluation procedures beyond classroom observation to ensure that they 1) are aligned with the system’s values and beliefs about teaching and learning, 2) are teaching the approved curriculum, 3) are directly engaged with all students in the oversight of their learning, and 4) use content-specific standards of professional practice. | •Curriculum maps  
•Supervision and evaluation procedures  
•Documentation of collection of lesson plans, grade books, or other data record systems  
•Peer or mentoring opportunities and interactions  
•Recognition of teachers with regard to these practices  
•Surveys results  
•Examples of improvements to instructional practices resulting from the evaluation process  
•Administrative classroom observation protocols and logs  
•Professional development offerings and plans tied to the prescribed education program, instructional strategies, developmentally appropriate practices, and student success | Level 4 |
| 3.5       | The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels. | All system staff participate in collaborative learning communities that meet both informally and formally on a regular schedule. Frequent collaboration occurs across grade levels, content areas, and other system divisions. Staff members implement a formal process system-wide that promotes productive discussion about student learning and the conditions that support student learning. Learning, using, and discussing the results of inquiry practices such as action research, the examination of student work, reflection, study teams, and peer coaching are a part of the daily routine of all staff members. System personnel can clearly link collaboration to improvement results in instructional practice, system effectiveness, and student performance. | •Common language, protocols and reporting tools  
•Agendas and minutes of collaborative learning committees  
•Calendar/schedule of learning community meetings  
•Survey results  
•Professional development funding to promote professional learning communities  
•Evidence of informal conversations that reflect collaboration about student learning  
•Examples of improvements to content and instructional practice resulting from collaboration | Level 4 |
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<td>3.6</td>
<td>Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning.</td>
<td>All teachers throughout the system use an instructional process that informs students of learning expectations and standards of performance. Exemplars are often provided to guide and inform students. The process includes multiple measures, including formative assessments, to inform the ongoing modification of instruction and provide data for possible curriculum revision. The process provides students with specific and timely feedback about their learning.</td>
<td>•Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance&lt;br&gt;•Survey results&lt;br&gt;•Examples of assessments that prompted modification in instruction&lt;br&gt;•Samples of exemplars used to guide and inform student learning</td>
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<td>3.7</td>
<td>Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.</td>
<td>Some system personnel are engaged in mentoring, coaching, and induction programs that are consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching, learning, and the conditions that support learning. These programs set expectations for system personnel.</td>
<td>•Survey results&lt;br&gt;•Records of meetings and informal feedback sessions&lt;br&gt;•Professional learning calendar with activities for instructional support of new staff&lt;br&gt;•Personnel manuals with information related to new hires including mentoring, coaching, and induction practices</td>
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| 3.8       | The system and all of its schools engage families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keep them informed of their children's learning progress. | Programs that engage families in meaningful ways in their children's education are designed, implemented, and evaluated at the system level and in all schools. Families have multiple ways of staying informed of their children's learning process. | • Performance-based report cards  
• Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance  
• Survey results  
• Volunteer program with variety of options for participation  
• List of varied activities and communications modes with families, e.g., info portal, online, newsletters, parent centers, academic nights, open house, early release days  
• Calendar outlining when and how families are provided information on child's progress  
• Parental/family/caregiver involvement plan including activities, timeframes, and evaluation process  
• Samples of exemplars used to guide and inform student learning | Level 4 |

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| 3.9       | The system designs and evaluates structures in all schools whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the student's school who supports that student's educational experience. | School personnel implement and participate in a structure designed and evaluated by the system that gives them long-term interaction with individual students, allowing them to build strong relationships over time with the student. All students may participate in the structure. The structure allows the school employee to gain insight into and serve as an advocate for the student's needs regarding learning skills, thinking skills, and life skills. | • Curriculum and activities of structures for adults advocating on behalf of students  
• Description of formalized structures for adults to advocate on behalf of students  
• Survey results  
• List of students matched to adults who advocate on their behalf  
• Master schedule with time for formalized structure | Level 3 |
Reflect upon your responses to each of the indicators and performance levels by considering and responding to the following questions when drafting your narrative response. Use language from the performance level descriptions to guide your writing. Cite
souces of evidence the External Review team members may be interested in reviewing.

The Standard 3 Committee was comprised of multiple stakeholders to include members of the county's strategic planning committee, members of the county office, school administrators, teachers, parents, and community members. The system strategic planning committee began by collecting feedback about school climate, curriculum, instructional practices, and assessments. The results of these surveys were used to determine the effectiveness of our teachers and schools on student learning. These surveys led to individual school and county-wide conversations that helped to reflect upon and guide best practices. In the end, the school governance councils completed a final review of the district self-assessment. Overall the committee found Standard 3 to be a strength for Dawson County Schools.

AREAS OF STRENGTH
Indicators 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.8, 3.12

Evidence clearly indicates curriculum and learning experiences prepare students for success at the next level, through posted learning objectives, course schedules, and learning expectations for different courses provided. K-8 curriculum pacing guides are established, which aligns curricular expectations for system.

Though strategies differ from grade level to grade level, teachers throughout the school system engage students in their learning through instructional strategies such as MAX Strategies, ACE Writing Strategy, Thinking Maps, CGI Math, and Formative Instructional Practices.

System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success. Varied evidence concurs that instructional practices are aligned with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning. Teachers are teaching the approved curriculum, are directly engaged with all students in the collaborative oversight of their learning, and use content specific standards of professional practice. Frequent collaboration occurs across grade levels, content areas and other system.

Volunteer programs, varied communication modes, and calendars allow the system and all of its schools to engage families in meaningful ways in their children's education and to keep them informed of their children's learning progress. This allows families multiple ways of staying informed of their children's educational progress and experience.

Dawson County Schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students. Data is systematically and continuously used to identify unique learning needs of all students at all levels of proficiency as well as other learning needs. Data is collected from multiple sources, RTI progress monitoring, and Classworks.

ACTIONS TO SUSTAIN STRENGTHS

In order to maintain the level of achievement in the Dawson County Schools, we must continue to grow and evolve. We remain committed to provide equitable and challenging learning experiences for all students. Additionally, we will continue to provide professional learning on highly effective instructional strategies and use of technology. We will strive to operate as a collaborative learning organization that focuses on student learning.

AREAS IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT

Although only one indicator (3.7) was marked level one or two, there is room for growth in the areas that are marked level three. A continued focus will be placed on science and social studies at the elementary level. Pacing guides for these content areas need to be aligned at all elementary schools. Benchmark assessments need to be implemented for science and social studies in grades 3-5. Opportunities for eighth
grade students to earn high school credits need to be made available to students. An intensive academic recovery program is needed for struggling 9th graders.

PLANS FOR IMPROVEMENT

By implementing data teams, as part of the district strategic plan, the process of monitoring curriculum, assessment, and instruction will be improved. Additionally, the data results will be used to make improvements to the overall instructional programs in the schools. Furthermore, the district will work on measuring the effectiveness of its professional learning opportunities on student achievement. Pacing guides and benchmark assessment for science and social studies will be implemented during the 2016-2017 school year. Science curriculum support resources will be developed in partnership with Pioneer RESA and will be aligned to new science standards. System assessment teams will be formed to create 3-5 benchmarks for science and social studies as this format was effective when developing 3-5 language arts and math benchmark assessments. Beginning with the 2016-2017 school year, with the realignment of grades 6th-12th, eighth grades students will have the opportunity to earn high school credit in physical science, 9th grade literature, and select elective courses. As part of the realignment, an intensive academic recovery program will be available to struggling 9th graders. The recovery program will be housed at HighTower Academy. The program will focus on providing one-on-one academic support to failing 9th graders with the goal of returning them to high school to graduate with cohort.

Additionally, to address indicator 3.7, the development of a teacher induction/mentor program is also a part of our strategic plan. Currently, a planning team is researching induction/mentor programs. Dawson County School System will develop and implement a plan to provide a strong, effective induction/mentor program for teachers.
Resources and Support Systems

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

Overall Rating: 3.62

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<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Statement or Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>The system engages in a systematic process to recruit, employ, and retain a sufficient number of qualified professional and support staff to fulfill their roles and responsibilities and support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, and educational programs.</td>
<td>Clearly defined policies, processes, and procedures ensure that system and school leaders have access to, hire, place, and retain qualified professional support staff. System and school leaders use a formal, systematic process to determine the number of personnel necessary to fill all the roles and responsibilities necessary to support purposes, educational programs, and continuous improvement throughout the district. Sustained fiscal resources are available to fund all positions necessary to achieve the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, and educational programs.</td>
<td>•Survey results&lt;br&gt;•District budgets or financial plans for the last three years&lt;br&gt;•District quality assurance procedures for monitoring qualified staff across all schools&lt;br&gt;•School budgets or financial plans for last three years&lt;br&gt;•Assessments of staffing needs&lt;br&gt;•Documentation of highly qualified staff&lt;br&gt;•Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement and retention of professional and support staff for the district and schools</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
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<th>Rating</th>
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<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, educational programs, and system operations.</td>
<td>Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are focused solely on supporting the purpose and direction of the system, its schools, educational programs, and system operations. Instructional time is fiercely protected in policy and practice in all schools. System and school leaders exhaust every option to secure material and fiscal resources to meet the needs of all students and improve the effectiveness of the system. System and school leaders measurably demonstrate that instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are allocated so that all students have equitable opportunities to attain challenging learning expectations. Efforts toward the continuous improvement of instruction and operations concentrate on achieving the purpose and direction of the system and its schools.</td>
<td>•Examples of school schedules&lt;br&gt;•District quality assurance procedures showing district oversight of schools pertaining to school resources&lt;br&gt;•Survey results&lt;br&gt;•Examples of school calendars&lt;br&gt;•Alignment of school budgets with school purpose and direction&lt;br&gt;•Alignment of district budget with district purpose and direction&lt;br&gt;•District strategic plan showing resources support for district</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
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<td>Indicator</td>
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<td>4.3</td>
<td>The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.</td>
<td>System and school leaders have adopted or collaboratively created clear definitions and expectations for maintaining safety, cleanliness, and a healthy environment, and have shared these definitions and expectations with all stakeholders. All system and school personnel as well as students are accountable for maintaining these expectations. Valid measures are in place that allow for continuous tracking of these conditions. Improvement plans are developed and implemented by appropriate personnel to continuously improve these conditions. The results of improvement efforts are systematically evaluated regularly.</td>
<td>•District quality control procedures showing the monitoring of compliance with district expectations for school facilities and learning environments •Example systems for school maintenance requests •Survey results •Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements •Policies, handbooks on district and school facilities and learning environments •Example maintenance schedules for schools •School safety committee responsibilities, meeting schedules, and minutes •Example school records of depreciation of equipment</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system.</td>
<td>The system has policies and procedures for strategic resource management. The system employs a long-range strategic planning process in the areas of budget, facilities, and other strategic system components. The strategic planning process is evaluated for effectiveness, and improvement plans related to the process are developed and implemented when necessary. Strategic plans are implemented with fidelity by the governing body, and system leaders and have built-in measures used to monitor implementation and completion.</td>
<td>•District strategic plan showing the areas of budget, facilities, quality control, and other strategic systems •Evaluation results of the effectiveness of the district strategic plan or indicators of changes resulting in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategic plan •Policies, handbooks on district and school facilities and learning environments</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
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<td>Indicator</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
<td>The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system.</td>
<td>The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to ensure that all students, school, and system personnel have access to the media and information resources necessary to achieve the educational programs of the system and its schools. The system implements and evaluates processes to ensure qualified personnel are recruited, hired, and retained in sufficient numbers to assist students, school and system personnel in learning about the tools and locations for finding and retrieving information.</td>
<td>• Data on media and information resources available to students and staff • Schedule of staff availability to assist students and school personnel related to finding and retrieving information</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
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<td>4.6</td>
<td>The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.</td>
<td>The system provides a modern, fully functional technology infrastructure, state-of-the-art equipment, and a highly qualified technical support staff to meet the teaching, learning, and operational needs of all stakeholders throughout the system. System and school personnel develop and administer needs assessments and use the resulting data to develop and implement a technology plan to continuously improve technology services, infrastructure, and equipment.</td>
<td>• Brief description of technology or web-based platforms that support the education delivery model • Policies relative to technology use at the district-level and school-level • Survey results • District technology plan and budget to improve technology services and infrastructure for the district-level and school-level • District quality control procedures that monitor the effectiveness of technology services at the district-level and school-level • Assessments to inform development of district and school technology plans • Brief description of learning management systems or data management systems that support the effective use of student assessment results, school effectiveness, and district effectiveness</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
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Reflect upon your responses to each of the indicators and performance levels by considering and responding to the following questions when drafting your narrative response. Use language from the performance level descriptions to guide your writing. Cite sources of evidence the External Review team members may be interested in reviewing.

**AREAS OF STRENGTH**

During the 2014-15 school year, the Dawson County School System has worked collaboratively on renewing its charter application as well as a new strategic plan and Advanced Education to be proactive in the direction and focus for the school system. The system leaders, school leaders, and stakeholders have collaboratively created clear definitions and expectations for maintaining safety and cleanliness in the facilities, which creates a healthy learning environment for the students. Valid measures are in place that allow for continuous monitoring of these conditions. The Dawson County School System strives for excellence in providing operational and facilities’ resources and services in...
all schools to support the system’s purpose.

The Dawson County School System and its stakeholders fully recognize the strong impact technology has on student learning as well as the role technology plays in administration and information systems. The system is committed to the full implementation of technology tools, devices, software, training, and maintenance services to ensure a reliable, state-of-the-art network is provided to all faculty, staff, students, parents, and stakeholders. A large part of this commitment to technology concerns funding. Ensuring a successful technology program requires a large financial commitment by the district, board of education, and the community. Funding has been secured and realized through the Special Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST), local school funds, state-allocated dollars, and a variety of grants.

The Dawson County School System has clearly defined policies, processes, and procedures in place for hiring, placement, and retaining highly qualified staff. The system revamped the supplemental salary schedule, added back all furlough days, the school student calendar returned to the full 180-day school year, and the board's contribution to the 403B was returned to the original contribution level. These economic advancements have put the system back to pre-recession financial standings. This helps Dawson County to be more competitive in order to attract and maintain a highly qualified staff.

**ACTIONS TO SUSTAIN STRENGTHS**

The school system has utilized an online tracking program, which tracks maintenance and technology requests to improve response times to increase user satisfaction. An audit process has been implemented for custodial services, which evaluates and tracks the average response to completion of all custodial requests.

The Dawson County School System completed a total renovation of the kitchen at the high school and added a new serving line to reduce serving time to maximize the serving time to accommodate the larger student population.

The network also offers wireless access points using the latest wireless networking standard at each campus, central office, the technology building, and maintenance facilities. Every classroom in Dawson County has a wireless access point. To enhance connection services and speed, the Dawson County School System purchases an additional 1 GB Internet access line from a third party provider.

The Dawson County School System has recognized the need for additional staff to support the areas of school improvement and professional learning. New positions have been added which include the following: Coordinator of Academic Innovation, Executive Director of Technology, and a part-time Coordinator of Instructional Technology. At the elementary schools an academic coach was created to aide teachers and students in academic innovations.

**AREAS IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT**

The Dawson County School system provides and coordinates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system. The existing media centers are traditional in design and approach; there is a need to utilize this space as a common learning space. The school system’s current method of obtaining local programming is antiquated. There is need to create an evaluation procedure to track the results of these educational resources.

**PLANS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

The system has a vision to redesign the traditional media centers to become a collaborative, common learning space. While the system has added a part-time instructional technology position, moving forward toward a one-to-one initiative, more positions will need to be added to
enhance the educational process. There is a need to implement an improved and updated video distribution via web browser. The media specialists will work with the technology committee at the building level to create procedures to effectively evaluate media resources.
Using Results for Continuous Improvement

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

Overall Rating: 3.2

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| 5.1       | The system establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system. | All system and school personnel maintain and consistently use a comprehensive assessment system that produces data from multiple assessment measures. These measures include locally developed and standardized assessments about student learning as well as school and system (including non-instructional divisions) performance. The comprehensive assessment system ensures consistent measurement across all classrooms, courses, educational programs and system divisions. All assessments are proven reliable and bias free. The comprehensive assessment system is regularly and systematically evaluated for reliability and effectiveness in improving instruction, student learning, and the conditions that support learning. | • Brief description of technology or web-based platforms that support the education delivery model  
  • Documentation or description of evaluation tools/protocols  
  • Survey results  
  • Brief description of student assessment system including range of data produced from standardized and local or school assessments on student learning and school performance  
  • Brief description of learning management systems or data management systems that support the effective use of student assessment results, school effectiveness, and district effectiveness  
  • Evidence that assessments are reliable and bias free | Level 4 |
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<td>5.2</td>
<td>Professional and support staff continuously collect, analyze and apply learning from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data about student learning, instruction, program evaluation, and organizational conditions that support learning.</td>
<td>Systematic processes and procedures for collecting, analyzing, and applying learning from multiple data sources are documented and used consistently by professional and support staff throughout the district. Data sources include comparison and trend data that provide a complete picture of student learning, instruction, the effectiveness of programs, and the conditions that support learning. System and school personnel use data to design, implement, and evaluate continuous improvement plans to improve student learning, instruction, the effectiveness of programs, and the conditions that support learning.</td>
<td>•Examples of data used to measure the effectiveness of the district systems that support schools and learning •District quality control procedures that monitor schools in effectively using data to improve instruction and student learning •List of data sources related to district effectiveness •Written protocols and procedures for data collection and analysis •Examples of use of data to design, implement, and evaluate continuous improvement plans and apply learning •List of data sources related to student learning, instruction, program effectiveness, and conditions that support learning</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
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<td>5.3</td>
<td>Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.</td>
<td>All professional and support staff members are assessed and trained in a rigorous professional development program related to the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.</td>
<td>•Professional learning schedule specific to the use of data •Documentation of attendance and training related to data use •Training materials specific to the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
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<td>Indicator</td>
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| 5.4       | The school system engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level. | Policies and procedures describe a process for analyzing data that determine verifiable improvement in student learning including readiness for and success at the next level. Results indicate improvement, and system and school personnel systematically use these results to design, implement, and evaluate the results of continuous improvement action plans related to student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level. | • Policies and procedures specific to data use and training  
• Student surveys  
• Agendas, minutes of meetings related to analysis of data  
• Description of process for analyzing data to determine verifiable improvement in student learning  
• Examples of use of results to evaluate continuous improvement action plans  
• Evidence of student readiness for the next level  
• Evidence of student growth  
• Evidence of student success at the next level | Level 3 |
Reflect upon your responses to each of the indicators and performance levels by considering and responding to the following questions when drafting your narrative response. Use language from the performance level descriptions to guide your writing. Cite sources of evidence the External Review team members may be interested in reviewing.

### AREAS OF STRENGTH

Dawson County Schools (DCS) maintains a comprehensive student assessment system designed to continually monitor student achievement. All students in grade K-10 participate in a universal screening assessment in reading and math three times per year. This assessment is administered through Classworks and is designed to assess both above and below grade level skills in order to pinpoint each student’s current level of achievement. Students that demonstrate below-level skills are assigned an Individual Learning Plan, which provides targeted remediation based upon the student’s individual deficit areas. K-8 students also participate in Dawson Quarterly Assessments (DQAs), which are common summative assessments administered at the end of each marking period. These assessments provide formative standard mastery data at the system, school, class, and individual levels. High school students also participate in benchmark assessments through both USA Test Prep and Classworks. Additionally, students at all grade levels are assessed via Student Learning Objectives in related arts and other non-content classes.

In addition to local assessment instruments, students participate in statewide testing through the Georgia Milestones Assessment System.
These instruments measure the level of standard mastery in core content areas in grades 3 - 8 End of Grade (EOG) assessments and in targeted courses in grades 9 - 12 End of Course (EOC) assessments. In addition to the criterion-referenced items designed to measure standard mastery, these assessments also contain norm-referenced items, which allow for national comparisons. High school students also participate in End-of-Pathway and Advanced Placement assessments.

Staff at both the system and school levels use data from these instruments to adjust instruction for groups or individual students as needed. School leadership teams use a variety of data to in order to determine areas of need for each school and subsequently develop school improvement goals based on these areas. These goals are monitored and adjusted as needed throughout the course of each school year. School and system improvement plans are shared.

At the classroom level, teachers use state assessment data, universal screening data, DQA data, and classroom assessment data to design instruction that is differentiated to meet the individual needs of students. Longitudinal data is available to teachers through the State Longitudinal Data System, and this information helps provide a comprehensive student achievement profile.

Students that demonstrate ongoing difficulty in skill attainment are monitored through the Response to Intervention (RTI) process. Students in Tiers II and III of RTI receive research-based remediation and participate in formal progress monitoring at least twice per month in order to ensure that progress is being made. If adequate progress is not demonstrated, interventions might be modified, or the student might be referred for psychoeducational testing in order to determine whether or not the student has a disability that is interfering with his ability to succeed in school.

Additionally, maintaining a comprehensive student assessment system, DCS has procedures in place to communicate regularly with stakeholders including students, parents, community members, staff members, and business partners. The superintendent meets four times throughout the year with the System Governance Council, comprised of administrators and parents from each of the schools. Similarly, each school principal meets monthly with his or her School Governance Council. These councils allow parents and business members to participate in decision-making processes in our schools and within the system pertaining to personnel, finances, curriculum and instruction, resource allocation, school improvement planning, and school operations.

The superintendent also meets four times each year with a Parent Cabinet. This is a less formal organization; they meet at different schools to tour facilities and discuss system-wide initiatives and issues. The organization provides a forum for parents to provide feedback and participate in open dialogue with the superintendent. The system and schools also maintain ongoing communication with parents and other stakeholders through a wide variety of social media and other e-communication including Twitter, Facebook, Remind, automatic dialer, and email.

ACTIONS TO SUSTAIN STRENGTHS

Dawson County Schools will maintain a strong focus on the importance of using data to make informed decisions about teaching and learning and all aspects of school improvement. Continuing the effective practices described above and committing to learn more about the effective use of data will ensure growth in this area.

AREAS IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT

Although staff members at individual schools and system support personnel can interpret the results of all assessments that are administered and utilize this data for instructional decision making, further training is needed in synthesizing data from multiple sources into a comprehensive portrait of instructional need at the system, school, class, and individual levels. Teachers need further training on how to
address conflicting data, when one assessment shows a weakness that is not reflected in another, and how to blend all assessment data in order to make the best instructional decisions within their classes.

PLANS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The system is currently working on a common approach to data analysis that will provide more consistency in discussing student achievement across the system. Steps will also be taken to ascertain whether data from multiple sources align to identify consistent patterns of strengths and weaknesses. By implementing data teams as part of the system strategic plan, skills to utilize data for continuous improvement in all aspects of teaching, learning, assessment, and operations will be strengthened.
Report Summary

Scores By Section

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<th>Section</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose and Direction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Governance and Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching and Assessing for Learning</td>
<td>3.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resources and Support Systems</td>
<td>3.62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using Results for Continuous Improvement</td>
<td>3.2</td>
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