



**Standards Assessment Report**  
**AdvancED District Accreditation**  
*For NCA CASI and SACS CASI Districts*

## **Introduction & Purpose of the Report**

Welcome to the AdvancED Standards Assessment Report for school systems.

The Standards Assessment Report is designed to serve as a valuable self-assessment and as a tool to help school systems prepare for their Quality Assurance Review. The report is based on the AdvancED standards, which serve as the foundation of the accreditation process. In order to earn and maintain accreditation, school districts must meet the AdvancED standards, engage in a process of continuous improvement, and demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review.

The Standards Assessment Report engages the school system in an in-depth assessment of each of the seven AdvancED standards. In completing the report, the school systems identifies the data, information, evidence, and documented results that validate that it is meeting each standard. This self assessment helps the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

The Standards Assessment Report also serves as the primary resource for the Quality Assurance Review Team, which uses the report to prepare for the visit to the school system. The team uses insights gathered from the report and information obtained during the on-site visit to provide feedback to the school system and to make an accreditation recommendation.

### **Structure of the Report**

The Standards Assessment Report includes four sections: 1) executive summary of the school system profile, 2) a review of each standard; 3) online peer-to-peer submission; and 4) conclusion.

The executive summary of the school system profile provides an opportunity for the school system to give a snapshot of the system's vision, goals, demographics, and community characteristics. This section helps provide the context for the standards assessment report.

The review of each standard is divided into three components: 1) the indicators rubric; 2) focus questions; and 3) overall assessment rubric. The indicators rubric enables the school system to assess the degree to which practices and/or processes are in place that indicate adherence to the standard and indicators. For each indicator, the school system may check if the practices and/or processes are highly functional, operational, emerging, or not evident. The school system should use the rubric as an opportunity to ask itself challenging questions and to respond with accurate answers geared toward self-improvement. After completing the rubric, the school system can quickly see areas of strength and opportunity. The section asks, "To what degree are the noted practices/processes in place?"

The focus questions allow the school system to expand on and think more deeply about the responses to the indicators rubric. The focus questions provide an opportunity for the school system to describe the systematic and systemic processes that are in place to support its ability to meet the indicators. The section asks, "How are the practices/processes implemented?"

The overall assessment describes how well the school system and its schools are implementing practices and/or processes and the impact these practices and/or processes have on student results and overall school effectiveness. The overall assessment helps the school system judge where it is in relation to each standard. The “operational” level is required in order to demonstrate meeting the standard. The section asks, “How well are we meeting the standard overall?”

The peer-to-peer submission section asks the school system to share an effective practice. The submission allows the school system to highlight a practice that it feels is indicative of the quality work occurring across the system and its schools. The review team may refer to the practice and use it as the basis for identifying other successful practices occurring in the school system. In addition, the practice is included in the online AdvancED Resource Network where it can be accessed by other AdvancED schools and school systems. Further detail on submitting a peer-to-peer practice is provided just prior to the conclusion section of this document.

### **Resource for Completing the Report**

To support your completion of the report, we have developed an “Examples of Evidence for School Systems” resource that can be downloaded in conjunction with this report. The examples allow school system personnel to think about the practices and/or processes being implemented and identify evidence that will support its responses to the indicators rubric and focus questions. The examples help the school system answer the question, “How do we know we are doing what we say we are doing?”

### **Completion and Submission of the Report**

This Standards Assessment Report is to be completed by the school system between six months and six weeks prior to hosting a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) visit. It is strongly recommended that a wide and broad cross-section of the school system’s community participate in completing this report. Please e-mail the completed report to the QAR chair with a copy to the State Office. The report will become the basis of the Quality Assurance Review Team’s review.

### **Directions for Completing the Report**

Follow the instructions to complete each section of the report. You may type directly in this document. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity. Submit the online peer-to-peer practice, using the instructions provided in this report.

## Executive Summary of School System Profile

Provide an overview of the school system's profile. Please include:

- The school system's vision and goals;
- A description of the programs and services (including number and type of schools) under the jurisdiction of the system;
- Demographic information about school system's community;
- A summary of student performance across the system;
- An overview of any major trends or issues impacting the school system; and
- A summary of the major strengths and needs of the school system.

## Pickens County Schools Executive Summary of School System Profile

### **Vision:**

**“Graduation for All”**

### **Mission Statement:**

We will educate our students in a safe, nurturing, and fiscally responsible learning environment that holds high expectations for all students.

### **We believe:**

- Each student should have the opportunity to learn, to be successful, and to become good citizens.
- All students can learn; however, some learn by different methods and at different speeds.
- Teaching and learning best takes place in a safe and nurturing environment.
- All students should have access to a quality education on an equal basis.
- The education of each student must be an effort that involves the support and participation of the school, parents, and community.
- Schools are accountable for student achievement and should strive for continued improvement.
- Quality education requires fiscally responsible expenditures for quality staff, programs, facilities, equipment, and technology.
- Recruiting, employing, and nurturing dedicated, well-qualified, and highly professional employees is important to a successful education program.
- All staff should have access to standards-based, collaborative staff development to improve professional skills.
- All policy, administrative, instructional, and educational support decisions should be based on student needs.
- Extracurricular activities are important in the overall development of students and these experiences contribute to academic success.
- Collaborative decision-making requires the input of all stakeholders.

The Pickens County School System is a mid-sized comprehensive rural school system with approximately 4500 students in a total of seven schools, comprised of four elementary, two middle, and one high school. The population has no significant sized ethnic minorities, being 93% white, 3% Hispanic, 1% black, and 3% other ethnicities. Approximately 40% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Six schools (all except the high school) are served as schoolwide Title I programs. There are less than 50 LEP/ESL students systemwide, with 90% attending a magnet school at Jasper Elementary.

Located in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains on the fringe of the metro Atlanta area, the county is rapidly growing, but the new additions to the population are mostly retired couples or “empty nesters”. More and more, the area is becoming a “bedroom community” for the more populous and more urban areas that lie south. There is also increasing disparity between the socioeconomic status of the schools versus the general wealth of the population. Despite the 40% F&R status of the student population, Pickens County is among the top quartile of wealthier per capita counties in the state, ranking a 12% poverty rate according to census data. There is no large industry within the community, and the school system is the largest single employer within the county. Small cottage industry, sales/service operations, and private residences and landholdings serve as the tax base for the county.

**Achievement Data**

During FY06 and FY07, all schools plus the system made AYP. In FY08, the SWD subgroup in Math did not perform as expected on the new Georgia Performance Standards. One school, Pickens County Middle School, and the system did not make AYP on the initial determination. When retest data was included in the calculations, the system did rise to meet AYP, but PCMS did not score sufficiently high enough to make AYP.

SAT data – Newly released SAT results showed a decline in Math performance during the 2008 school year, resulting in lower SAT scores than the preceding year. Although it is too early to determine if this is a trend, this disappointing performance has prompted the system to devote more resources into the math program.

2006-2007 Testing Data Information  
*Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)*

Indicator	Pickens	Georgia
Total Score	1,494	1,472
Writing	483	483
Verbal	511	494
Math	500	495

2007-2008 Testing Data Information  
*Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)*

Indicator	Pickens	Georgia
Total Score	1,467	1,466
Writing	481	477
Verbal	499	486
Math	487	490

**GHS GT (Georgia High School Graduation Test):** Across the board, PCS data compares very positively to state results on the GHS GT tests.

System code	System name	Percent Pass LAR	Percent Pass Math	Percent Pass Science	Percent Pass Social Studies
712	Pickens County	90	95	93	91
STATE	State	89	89	85	82

**CRCT (Criterion Referenced Competency Test) data:**

Across the board with only a few isolated areas, PCS data compares very favorably to state results on the CRCT tests.

CRCT 2008, All students by state Grade 1						
State	# Tested Reading	Reading: Mean Scale Score	Reading: % Did not meet the standard	Reading: % Meets the standard	Reading: % Exceeds the standard	Reading: % Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	130416	836.64	9.7	51.6	38.7	90.3

PICKENS COUNTY 389 838.72 9.3 46.5 44.2 90.7

State	# Tested ELA	ELA: Mean Scale Score	ELA: % Did not meet the standard	ELA: % Meets the standard	ELA: % Exceeds the standard	ELA: % Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	130408	825.88	15.5	63.9	20.5	84.5

PICKENS COUNTY 389 825.25 14.1 64.8 21.1 85.9

State	# Tested Math	Math: Mean Scale Score	Math: % Did not meet the standard	Math: % Meets the standard	Math: % Exceeds the standard	Math: % Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	130605	833.86	13.6	52.1	34.3	86.4

PICKENS COUNTY 390 836.41 11.5 46.7 41.8 88.5

CRCT 2008, All students by state Grade 2						
State	# Tested Reading	Reading: Mean Scale Score	Reading: % Did not meet the standard	Reading: % Meets the standard	Reading: % Exceeds the standard	Reading: % Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	128221	837.85	8.0	52.6	39.4	92.0

PICKENS COUNTY 319 847.08 3.4 43.9 52.7 96.6

State	# Tested ELA	ELA: Mean Scale Score	ELA: % Did not meet the standard	ELA: % Meets the standard	ELA: % Exceeds the standard	ELA: % Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	128196	826.33	15.9	58.2	25.9	84.1

PICKENS COUNTY 319 835.04 8.5 56.7 34.8 91.5

State	# Tested Math	Math: Mean Scale Score	Math: % Did not meet the standard	Math: % Meets the standard	Math: % Exceeds the standard	Math: % Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	128357	828.41	14.5	63.3	22.2	85.5

PICKENS COUNTY 319 833.66 7.5 63.3 29.2 92.5

CRCT 2008, All students by state Grade 3						
State	# Tested Reading	Reading: Mean Scale Score	Reading: % Did not meet the standard	Reading: % Meets the standard	Reading: % Exceeds the standard	Reading: % Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	127388	833.47	12.5	53.0	34.5	87.5
PICKENS COUNTY	372	838.57	8.6	49.7	41.7	91.4

  

State	# Tested ELA	ELA: Mean Scale Score	ELA: % Did not meet the standard	ELA: % Meets the standard	ELA: % Exceeds the standard	ELA: % Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	127335	829.15	12.9	60.5	26.6	87.1
PICKENS COUNTY	371	831.78	9.4	62.3	28.3	90.6

  

State	# Tested Math	Math: Mean Scale Score	Math: % Did not meet the standard	Math: % Meets the standard	Math: % Exceeds the standard	Math: % Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	127598	825.10	29.1	39.5	31.4	70.9
PICKENS COUNTY	372	832.58	24.5	40.1	35.5	75.5

  

State	# Tested Science	Science: Mean Scale Score	Science: % Did not meet the standard	Science: % Meets the standard	Science: % Exceeds the standard	Science: % Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	127462	823.40	25.4	49.2	25.3	74.6
PICKENS COUNTY	370	833.87	18.9	44.9	36.2	81.1

  

State	# Tested Social Studies	Social Studies: Mean Scale Score	Social Studies: % Did not meet the standard	Social Studies: % Meets the standard	Social Studies: % Exceeds the standard	Social Studies: % Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	127102	330.70	11.0	65.2	23.8	89.0
PICKENS COUNTY	369	334.84	7.6	64.2	28.2	92.4

<b>CRCT 2008, All students by state Grade 4</b>						
<b>State</b>	<b># Tested Reading</b>	<b>Reading: Mean Scale Score</b>	<b>Reading: % Did not meet the standard</b>	<b>Reading: % Meets the standard</b>	<b>Reading: % Exceeds the standard</b>	<b>Reading: % Met or Exceeded the standard</b>
GA	124302	830.74	12.5	56.1	31.4	87.5
PICKENS COUNTY	359	834.16	10.6	54.3	35.1	89.4
<b>State</b>	<b># Tested ELA</b>	<b>ELA: Mean Scale Score</b>	<b>ELA: % Did not meet the standard</b>	<b>ELA: % Meets the standard</b>	<b>ELA: % Exceeds the standard</b>	<b>ELA: % Met or Exceeded the standard</b>
GA	124301	829.48	13.8	58.4	27.8	86.2
PICKENS COUNTY	359	834.05	12.8	52.9	34.3	87.2
<b>State</b>	<b># Tested Math</b>	<b>Math: Mean Scale Score</b>	<b>Math: % Did not meet the standard</b>	<b>Math: % Meets the standard</b>	<b>Math: % Exceeds the standard</b>	<b>Math: % Met or Exceeded the standard</b>
GA	124551	818.75	29.9	49.3	20.7	70.1
PICKENS COUNTY	359	820.08	27.9	48.5	23.7	72.1
<b>State</b>	<b># Tested Science</b>	<b>Science: Mean Scale Score</b>	<b>Science: % Did not meet the standard</b>	<b>Science: % Meets the standard</b>	<b>Science: % Exceeds the standard</b>	<b>Science: % Met or Exceeded the standard</b>
GA	124442	826.07	26.2	41.2	32.6	73.8
PICKENS COUNTY	359	836.93	15.3	43.7	40.9	84.7
<b>State</b>	<b># Tested Social Studies</b>	<b>Social Studies: Mean Scale Score</b>	<b>Social Studies: % Did not meet the standard</b>	<b>Social Studies: % Meets the standard</b>	<b>Social Studies: % Exceeds the standard</b>	<b>Social Studies: % Met or Exceeded the standard</b>
GA	124051	330.28	9.9	66.6	23.6	90.1
PICKENS COUNTY	359	336.03	7.8	62.4	29.8	92.2

<b>CRCT 2008, All students by state Grade 5</b>						
<b>STATE</b>	<b># tested Reading</b>	<b>Reading: Mean Scale Score</b>	<b>Reading: % Did not meet the standard</b>	<b>Reading: % Meets the standard</b>	<b>Reading: % Exceeds the standard</b>	<b>% Met or Exceeded the standard</b>
GA	121830	826.12	12.8	65.7	21.5	87.2

PICKENS COUNTY 317 830.23 10.4 63.4 26.2 89.6

<b>STATE</b>	<b># tested ELA</b>	<b>ELA: Mean Scale Score</b>	<b>ELA: % Did not meet the standard</b>	<b>ELA: % Meets the standard</b>	<b>ELA: % Exceeds the standard</b>	<b>Met or Exceeded the standard</b>
GA	121811	833.01	10.0	61.2	28.7	90.0

PICKENS COUNTY 317 840.38 7.9 52.7 39.4 92.1

<b>STATE</b>	<b># tested Math</b>	<b>Math: Mean Scale Score</b>	<b>Math: % Did not meet the standard</b>	<b>Math: % Meets the standard</b>	<b>Math: % Exceeds the standard</b>	<b>Met or Exceeded the standard</b>
GA	122058	823.74	28.4	45.4	26.3	71.6

PICKENS COUNTY 318 820.18 29.9 49.1 21.1 70.1

<b>STATE</b>	<b># tested Science</b>	<b>Science: Mean Scale Score</b>	<b>Science: % Does not meet the standard</b>	<b>Science: % Meets the standard</b>	<b>Science: % Exceeds the standard</b>	<b>% Met or Exceeded the standard</b>
GA	121955	821.66	28.7	45.7	25.6	71.3

PICKENS COUNTY 317 835.98 15.8 46.4 37.9 84.2

<b>STATE</b>	<b># tested Social Studies</b>	<b>Social Studies: Mean Scale Score</b>	<b>Social Studies: % Does not meet the standard</b>	<b>Social Studies: % Meets the standard</b>	<b>Social Studies: % Exceeds the standard</b>	<b>Social Studies: % Met or Exceeded the standard</b>
GA	121578	330.76	11.1	64.4	24.6	88.9

PICKENS COUNTY 317 335.62 7.3 60.3 32.5 92.7

<b>CRCT 2008, All students by state Grade 6</b>						
<b>State</b>	<b># tested Reading</b>	<b>Reading: Mean Scale Score</b>	<b>% Did not meet the standard</b>	<b>Reading: % Meets the standard</b>	<b>% Exceeds the standard</b>	<b>% Met or Exceeded the standard</b>
GA	120941	832.48	8.6	60.9	30.5	91.4

PICKENS COUNTY 345 836.28 8.7 58.3 33.0 91.3

<b>State</b>	<b># tested ELA</b>	<b>ELA: Mean Scale Score</b>	<b>ELA: % Did not meet the standard</b>	<b>ELA: % Meets the standard</b>	<b>ELA: % Exceeds the standard</b>	<b>Met or Exceeded the standard</b>
GA	120924	829.17	12.6	64.3	23.1	87.4

PICKENS COUNTY

<b>State</b>	<b># tested Math</b>	<b>Math: Mean Scale Score</b>	<b>Math: % Did not meet the standard</b>	<b>Math: % Meets the standard</b>	<b>Math: % Exceeds the standard</b>	<b>Met or Exceeded the standard</b>
GA	121185	814.52	30.7	57.3	12.0	69.3

PICKENS COUNTY 345 821.90 22.0 60.0 18.0 78.0

<b>State</b>	<b># tested Science</b>	<b>Science: Mean Scale Score</b>	<b>Science: % Does not meet standard</b>	<b>Science: % Meets the standard</b>	<b>% Exceeds the standard</b>	<b>% Met or Exceeded the standard</b>
GA	121021	812.21	34.0	56.1	10.0	66.0

PICKENS COUNTY 343 817.62 23.9 63.0 13.1 76.1

CRCT 2008, All students by state Grade 7						
State	# tested Reading	Reading: Mean Scale Score	Reading: % Did not meet the standard	Reading: % Meets the standard	Reading: % Exceeds the standard	% Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	120745	824.26	12.0	75.0	13.0	88.0

PICKENS COUNTY 311 828.65 8.7 73.0 18.3 91.3

State	# tested ELA	ELA: Mean Scale Score	ELA: % Did not meet the standard	ELA: % Meets the standard	ELA: % Exceeds the standard	Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	120713	831.29	10.3	61.1	28.6	89.7

PICKENS COUNTY 311 835.29 9.0 54.0 37.0 91.0

State	# tested Math	Math: Mean Scale Score	Math: % Did not meet the standard	Math: % Meets the standard	Math: % Exceeds the standard	Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	120878	827.58	20.2	54.1	25.7	79.8

PICKENS COUNTY 311 833.51 16.1 50.8 33.1 83.9

State	# tested Science	Science: Mean Scale Score	Science: % Does not meet the standard	Science: % Meets the standard	Science: % Exceeds the standard	% Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	120734	824.85	24.9	50.3	24.8	75.1

PICKENS COUNTY 311 832.84 18.3 46.3 35.4 81.7

CRCT 2008 All students by state Grade 8						
State	# tested Reading	Reading: Mean Scale Score	Reading: % Did not meet the standard	Reading: % Meets the standard	Reading: % Exceeds the standard	% Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	122131	828.85	9.4	68.4	22.1	90.6

PICKENS COUNTY 340 832.22 7.1 66.8 26.2 92.9

State	# tested ELA	ELA: Mean Scale Score	ELA: % Did not meet the standard	ELA: % Meets the standard	ELA: % Exceeds the standard	Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	122014	833.56	10.6	56.5	32.8	89.4

PICKENS COUNTY 340 839.14 8.5 54.4 37.1 91.5

State	# tested Math	Math: Mean Scale Score	Math: % Did not meet the standard	Math: % Meets the standard	Math: % Exceeds the standard	Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	122268	812.94	37.9	46.6	15.5	62.1

PICKENS COUNTY 340 823.33 27.9 46.5 25.6 72.1

State	# tested Science	Science: Mean Scale Score	Science: % Does not meet the standard	Science: % Meets the standard	Science: % Exceeds the standard	% Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	121870	809.03	40.3	49.1	10.5	59.7

PICKENS COUNTY 339 821.05 26.0 54.6 19.5 74.0

State	# tested Social Studies	Social Studies: Mean Scale Score	Social Studies: % Does not meet the standard	Social Studies: % Meets the standard	Social Studies: % Exceeds the standard	Social Studies: % Met or Exceeded the standard
GA	121282	806.80	41.1	49.6	9.3	58.9

PICKENS COUNTY 339 823.06 25.7 51.0 23.3 74.3

### Strengths and Challenges:

There are both strengths and challenges to being a small system with somewhat limited resources. We believe the following to be some of our strengths:

- The system and community enjoy a mutually supportive relationship.
- The system employs data driven decision-making.
- Strong, capable, enthusiastic administrators provide instructional leadership at the school level.
- We believe that Pickens County is a good school system, but we realize that it could be a great school system with more focus and effort.
- The local board and the administration focus on forward progress and the need to establish a system of continuous improvement and work collaboratively to that end.

- The size of the school system allows for a sense of community, and there is collaboration and collegiality between teachers.

Being a small system also bring its external and internal challenges. Some of the external challenges encountered are the following:

- There is a lack of industry to increase tax base to generate funds for things beyond basic operations.
- The schools contend with apathetic or non-involved parents with their child’s education or the school which make it hard to build partnerships between the home and school.
- The county population is shifting to an older population with no vested interest in the school system.
- Census demographics and the AYP status make it difficult to qualify for grant monies.
- Sometimes agencies do not coordinate resources and communicate well with each other.
- Lack of good employment opportunities in the area do not encourage students to remain in school to get a better paying job. Those students who do go to post secondary education often do not return to the area because of the lack of opportunities.

Some of the internal challenges are as follows:

- There is often a culture of complacency. We’re doing “okay” makes is difficult to make a case for proactive change.
- Change is difficult to effect unless there is some external critical need that forces change upon the system. We tend to focus on reactive change, lagging indicators rather than leading indicators..
- There is a lack of proactive planning for instructional goals in subjects where we are doing well. We tend to focus on those areas where achievement is low.
- Despite recent growth, this is a small community with many personal, familial relationships and political connections that can impact decisions.
- Overall, there are a large number of veteran teachers who are resistant to change.

### **Summary:**

Like many other small to medium-sized school systems, Pickens County finds itself trying to do more with less. Although the local board and community have been very generous with resources, needs of special populations and the cost of growth and change are expanding more rapidly than tax revenues and the industrial base. Appreciating the need to be focused and frugal with our resources, we plan to use our continuous improvement process to target identified areas and focus our time, energy, and resources on critical issues.

## Vision & Purpose

**STANDARD:** The system establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the system.

Impact Statement: A system is successful in meeting this standard when it commits to a purpose and direction that is shared system-wide. The leadership establishes expectations for student learning aligned with the system’s vision that is supported by system and school personnel and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and district effectiveness. The system’s vision guides allocations of time and human, material, and fiscal resources.

### Indicators Rubric

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system’s responses to the focus questions.

<b>INDICATORS</b>		<b>Not Evident</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Operational</b>	<b>Highly Functional</b>
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the system:</b>					
1.1	Establishes a vision and purpose for the system in collaboration with its stakeholders			<b>X</b>	
1.2	Communicates the system’s vision and purpose to build stakeholder understanding and support			<b>X</b>	
1.3	Identifies system-wide goals and measures to advance the vision			<b>X</b>	
1.4	Develops and continuously maintains a profile of the system, its students, and the community			<b>X</b>	
1.5	Ensures that the system’s vision and purpose guide the teaching and learning process and the strategic direction of schools, departments, and services			<b>X</b>	
1.6	Reviews its vision and purpose systematically and revises them when appropriate				<b>X</b>

### Definitions

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

## Focus Questions

Please respond to the following questions regarding the processes that are in place to support the school system's implementation of the research-based practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school system's self-assessment on the indicators rubric. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

1. What is the process for establishing and building understanding of and commitment to the vision statement among the school system and its stakeholders?

The Pickens County Schools vision statement was built through input from the school board, staff, school councils, booster clubs, PTO groups, and other stakeholder organizations. The statement was then put on our website for input. The vision is reviewed each year by all stakeholders to ensure it goes along with the ongoing strategic planning process and that it reflects directly on student performance. Once a final vision statement is agreed on by all it is then presented to the board of education for official adoption. The statement must lay on the table for thirty days to invite more input from all stakeholders. The board then unanimously approved the draft.

2. What is the system's process for maintaining and using information that describes the school system, its programs, services, and schools and their performance?

Through the GAPSS process each school and the system maintains a profile which is updated yearly. There is also the school website and the system brochure which contains information about the system and individual schools. The information contains test results and comparisons to area and state scores. Also on the website is a password protected portal for parents to check on student attendance, grades, upcoming assignments, and missing assignments. Information is also given on how to access important information on the Georgia Department of Education website. The Pickens County School System also uses off-grade assessments to track progress of the students annual reports are studied and reacted to such as reports from PSAT, SAT, EOCT, AP, and other tests. These assessments and reports allow us to notice negative trends before they get started.

3. How does the leadership ensure that the system's vision, purpose, and goals guide the work of the school system and its schools?

The superintendent meets weekly with his key people in the central office. All members of the county wide leadership team (approximately 25 people meet once a month followed by a principal's meeting. The principals also meet separately each month. These meetings focus on current issues that affect everyone in the system. Also there are times when experts are brought in to explain certain issues or offer suggestion on how to best approach problems. The leadership also reviews each schools SIP to ensure it reflects the systems vision and purpose as well as the needs of the individual school.

4. What process is used to ensure that the vision and purpose of the school system remain current and aligned with the system's expectations in support of student learning and the effectiveness of the school system and its schools?

As previously stated the schools submit an individual school improvement plan. That plan is examined and updated each year to make sure it remains aligned with the district goals and visions found in the system improvement plan. The leadership also makes sure the SIPs are addressing the most current needs of the students as determined by reviewing the latest data from diagnosis tests. This review lets us know if the current strategies are having the desired effect on student progress and the effectiveness of the individual schools and the system as a whole.

## Governance & Leadership

**STANDARD:** The system provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and system effectiveness.

Impact Statement: A system is successful in meeting this standard when it has leaders who are advocates for the system’s vision and improvement efforts. The leaders provide direction and allocate resources to implement curricular and co-curricular programs that enable students to achieve expectations for their learning. Leaders function with clearly defined authority and responsibility and encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for system and school improvement among stakeholders. The system’s policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation.

### Indicators Rubric

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system’s responses to the focus questions.

<b>INDICATORS</b>		<b>Not Evident</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Operational</b>	<b>Highly Functional</b>
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the system operates under the jurisdiction of a governing authority that:</b>					
2.1	Establishes and communicates policies and procedures that provide for the effective operation of the system				<b>X</b>
2.2	Recognizes and preserves the executive, administrative, and leadership authority of the administrative head of the system				<b>X</b>
2.3	Ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations				<b>X</b>
2.4	Implements policies and procedures that provide for the orientation and training of the governing board				<b>X</b>
2.5	Builds public support, secures sufficient resources, and acts as a steward of the system’s resources				<b>X</b>
2.6	Maintains access to legal counsel to advise or obtain information about legal requirements and obligations				<b>X</b>
2.7	Maintains adequate insurance or equivalent resources to protect its financial stability and administrative operations				<b>X</b>
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the system has leadership that:</b>					
2.8	Provides for systematic analysis and review of student performance and school and system effectiveness				<b>X</b>
2.9	Creates and supports collaborative networks of stakeholders to support system programs				<b>X</b>

2.10	Provides direction, assistance, and resources to align, support, and enhance all parts of the system in meeting organizational and student performance goals				X
2.11	Provides internal and external stakeholders meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership				X
2.12	Assesses and addresses community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction				X
2.13	Implements an evaluation system that provides for the professional growth of all personnel			X	

### Definitions

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

### Focus Questions

Please respond to the following questions regarding the processes that are in place to support the school system’s implementation of the research-based practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school system’s self-assessment on the indicators rubric. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

1. What is the process for establishing, communicating, and implementing policies and procedures for the effective operation of the school system and its schools?

The Pickens County Board of Education is made up of five members, one from each of five districts within the county. This Board then appoints a superintendent. The superintendent is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school system. He is under the authority and direction of the school board. The school board sets policies which recognize the proper duties of the board, the superintendent, and the principals. New board members go through the Georgia School Board Association training as soon as possible after taking office. Board members go through yearly training updates and other specific training as needed. The Board also has an attorney who is present at all meeting and as needed at any other time. All board policies are on the Pickens County Schools website which is available to any stakeholder.

2. What process does the system’s leadership use to evaluate system effectiveness and its impact on student performance?

The system takes all information provided by the state and disaggregates this data by subgroups. This information is passed on to the administrators at the school level to evaluate. This group then reviews what is having a positive effect on student achievement and what can be changed based on this data. Scores at all levels are used starting with the CRCT in the lower grades to the EOCT and GHSGT in high school. Other information studied includes the latest dropout rate – a monthly report is given at each board meeting – and attendance which is also updated monthly. These

reports are given monthly to check for trends. All of this data is compared to other schools in our RESA district and to the state information.

3. In what ways are stakeholders, including system and school staff, given opportunities to provide leadership and to contribute to the decision-making process?

Decisions are looked at and input given at all levels of stakeholders. Student councils, school advisory councils, departments or grade levels, department head groups, and others all give input at the school level. This input is then passed along to the system level. At each level stakeholders give their input on decisions made. At the systems level there is a parent involvement coordinator who works with groups from all schools to get their school and the system as a whole. Outside checks from state and federal agencies give additional feedback as well.

4. What policies and processes are in place to ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation?

As Georgia goes through changes in the curriculum at all levels, growth and innovation are absolute musts. In these changing times new strategies must be looked at and evaluated. These changes give all students an opportunity to choose a pathway for themselves. Classes are offered at all levels with the students with mild to moderate disabilities in programs that take them into the work force to learn a vocation up to the AP courses or the joint college enrollment programs available. Equity of opportunities is increasing as the schools increase the use of co-teaching or an inclusion model to get the special needs students in the regular education classrooms.

## Teaching & Learning

**STANDARD:** The system provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Impact Statement: A system is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning that provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The system ensures that teachers use proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process; provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations; and give students feedback to improve their performance.

### Indicators Rubric

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system's responses to the focus questions.

<b>INDICATORS</b>		<b>Not Evident</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Operational</b>	<b>Highly Functional</b>
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the system:</b>					
3.1	Develops, articulates, and coordinates curriculum based on clearly- defined expectations for student learning, including essential knowledge and skills			X	
3.2	Establishes expectations and supports student engagement in the learning process, including opportunities for students to explore application of higher order thinking skills and investigate new approaches to applying their learning			X	
3.3	Ensures that system-wide curricular and instructional decisions are based on data and research at all levels				X
3.4	Supports instruction that is research-based and reflective of best practice				X
3.5	Supports a curriculum that challenges and meets the needs of each student, reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity				X
3.6	Allocates and protects instructional time to support student learning				X
3.7	Maintains articulation among and between all levels of schooling to monitor student performance and ensure readiness for future schooling or employment			X	
3.8	Supports the implementation of interventions to help students meet expectations for student learning			X	

3.9	Maintains a system-wide climate that supports student learning				X
3.10	Ensures that curriculum is reviewed and revised at regular intervals				X
3.11	Coordinates and ensures ready access to instructional technology, information and media services, and materials needed for effective instruction			X	

**Definitions**

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
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**Focus Questions**

Please respond to the following questions regarding the processes that are in place to support the school system’s implementation of the research-based practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school system’s self-assessment on the indicators rubric. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

1. How does the system ensure the alignment and articulation of curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments in support of the expectations for student learning?

Pickens County Schools have developed system wide curriculum guide in which teachers who teach common subjects got together and decided what was to be taught at each grade level in each subject area. The lower groups met with the middle school groups which then met with the high school groups. This ensured continuity throughout each subject area. Also this eliminates the teaching of an objective at different grade levels. In addition to the curriculum guides they also established pacing guides, lesson plans, and common assessments. These ensure students are covering the same material at the same pace in all classrooms. This year (2008-2009) Pickens County has in place a math coach at the high school to assist with the new curriculum coming in this year and an academic coach at the middle school level with the emphasis on math. These teachers will be another way to make sure the alignment and strategies used are consistent.

2. In what ways does the system promote and support the implementation of research-based instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that facilitate achievement for all students?

The Pickens County Schools relies heavily on the GADOE activities and strategies on their website especially for the new GPs curriculum. The DOE has had many training sessions and workshops for this exact purpose. Then the departments’ heads or team leaders monitor their people to make sure these strategies and techniques are used in the classroom in a positive manner. The building principal oversees the staff by doing walkthroughs and formal evaluations to monitor what is going on in the classrooms. The strategies from the GADOE are research based and have been used before. However, teachers have the option to be innovative of things that are not going as well as they schools. Pickens County Schools use the local RESA as a primary source of professional

development. Also experts are brought in just for our teachers to address areas we have identified as problems, such as math throughout the curriculum.

3. What processes are implemented to ensure that all staff members are well-prepared to support and implement the district's expectations for student learning?

As stated in the previous question our primary sources of staff development are NG RESA and people brought in locally to help in certain areas. As the state of Georgia has moved to a new curriculum, many training sessions have been held in each area. Either each teacher went to the training or went through redelivery at their school. Lisa Smith at RESA is our school improvement specialist who works with everything from school improvement plans to practicum programs to GAPPS school improvement teams. Again at the school level administrators do walk throughs as well as formal observations to ensure teachers are performing at the highest level they can and that they have all the materials needed. After the training through RESA there are department or grade level meetings to discuss what is working and what is not and why. All of these discussions focus on the districts expectations for student learning. Support also comes from the district level with a person designated to deal with elementary curriculum and one with middle and high school.

4. How does the system ensure that all students and staff have access to comprehensive information, instructional technology, and media services?

Each school in the Pickens County School System develops a school technology plan as a part of the system technology plan. The media specialist has a major part of developing the plan in collaboration with the media center use plan. All schools are using programs such as Successmaker, DIBELS, Renaissance Place, Study Island, USA test prep, SAT prep online, GHSGT remediation and instruction and Nova Net or Odyssey Ware. These programs are all online programs to help students in different areas. At each school the media specialist offers a wide range of services both technological and dealing with comprehensive information. Media Centers are open before and after school for student use. In each classroom teachers have access to the internet to bring up additional information as needed. The system is moving toward establishing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classrooms by adding LCD projectors, SmartBoards, remote Bluetooth mice and student response devices. Password protected information on grades and attendance on each student is available to parents or guardians.

## Documenting & Using Results

**STANDARD:** The system enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and system effectiveness.

Impact Statement: A school system is successful in meeting this standard when it uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly-defined performance measures. The assessment system is used to assess student performance on expectations for student learning, identify gaps between expectations for student learning and student performance, evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, and determine interventions to improve student performance. The assessment system yields timely and accurate information that is meaningful and useful to system and school leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders in understanding student performance, system and school effectiveness, and the results of improvement efforts.

### Indicators Rubric

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system's responses to the focus questions.

<b>INDICATORS</b>		<b>Not Evident</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Operational</b>	<b>Highly Functional</b>
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the system:</b>					
4.1	Establishes and implements a comprehensive assessment system, aligned with the system's expectations for student learning, that yields information which is reliable, valid, and bias free			X	
4.2	Ensures that student assessment data are used to make decisions for continuous improvement of teaching and learning				X
4.3	Conducts a systematic analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness, including support systems, and uses the results to improve student and system performance			X	
4.4	Provides a system of communication which uses a variety of methods to report student performance and system effectiveness to all stakeholders				X
4.5	Uses comparison and trend data from comparable school systems to evaluate student performance and system effectiveness				X
4.6	Demonstrates verifiable growth in student performance that is supported by multiple sources of evidence				X
4.7	Maintains a secure, accurate, and complete student record system in accordance with state and federal regulations				X

## Definitions

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## Focus Questions

Please respond to the following questions regarding the processes that are in place to support the school system’s implementation of the research-based practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school system’s self-assessment on the indicators rubric. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

1. How is the assessment system currently used throughout the school system and its schools to guide analysis of changes in student performance?

Pickens County Schools (PCS) use a balanced system of formative and summative assessments that are aligned to the Georgia Performance Standards to both track student progress and to provide teachers and students with information for diagnosing gaps in student acquisition of academic content. To determine its strengths and weaknesses, the District analyzes student performance on assessments at the district level, at the school level, and at the grade level. In addition, the district analyzes the gains made by AYP subgroups and whether the performance gaps are closing between student groups that are traditionally lower-performing and their traditionally higher-performing counterparts. The district also, when possible, analyzes student performance by comparing current results to multiple other data points, such as the current results to the previous 3 years’ results (longitudinal look) and the current results to the results of others (i.e., “snapshot” compared to the State, the Nation, the RESA district, and similar districts of comparable demographic profiles).

2. What are you doing to ensure that assessment results are timely, relevant, and communicated in a way that can be used by the system, its schools, and stakeholders to aid the performance of individual students?

The District creates and maintains a calendar of district-wide assessments that is posted on the district website and published in the local newspaper. Some assessments, such as the End of Course Tests (EOCT) are administered online. These administrations create instantaneous reports including student results, so students have immediate knowledge of their grade. Student listings, graphs, and summary tables are provided to school, area, and district users regarding State and District Assessments, attendance, pupil progression, graduation status, and discipline data. Data trends and historical data are included. Data from the state AYP website is accessed by both district and school personnel to examine progress of all students and the progress of those significant subgroups within our system. Awareness sessions in district leadership meetings are conducted for school and district staff to support understanding.

Individual schools are also provided their test data, both in summative paper format and in electronic format that can be disaggregated to analyze specific performance of individual students, classes, and grades on electronic programs. Electronic data can be restructured for different class assignments so teachers are aware of the performance of students in their class on the previous

year's state assessments. The results are used in combination with other measurements to track the progress of individual students, particularly those who have been identified for RTI tracking.

Parents are informed of their child's progress by paper reports for all summative assessments, and to insure that stakeholders are informed, the district publishes test results on its website, as well as in the local newspaper.

3. How are data used to understand and improve overall effectiveness of the school system and its schools?

Test data are reviewed by the Board of Education and by the district leadership team to determine the efficacy of school programs. The district is continually analyzing data to ensure that current processes are at the highest level of efficiency. Data is analyzed in all curriculum areas at all grade levels to monitor progress and assess deficiencies. Student assessment data related to academic initiatives (e.g. Successmaker) are monitored on a continual basis. These ongoing processes provide district/school leadership with the necessary evidence to make adjustments in training, practice, and resource alignment as necessary to facilitate student achievement.

4. How are staff members across the system and its schools trained to understand and use data to impact teaching and learning in the classroom?

The district test coordinator and the school improvement specialist as well as school level personnel provide professional development and assistance in: (a) understanding State and federal accountability; (b) administration and security of assessments; (c) understanding the purpose and uses of assessments; (d) analyzing assessment results; (e) developing high-quality classroom assessments; (f) student-level goal setting; and (g) understanding reports and aligning instruction.

The local RESA (regional educational association) and the Georgia Department of Education also provide workshops on the interpretation, analysis, and use of assessment data in guiding instruction and goal-setting. This knowledge is redelivered at the school level and used to guide classroom practice and school level goals.

## Resource & Support Systems

**STANDARD:** The system has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Impact Statement: A system is successful in meeting this standard when it has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that: enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, meets special needs, and complies with applicable regulations. The system employs and allocates staff well-qualified for their assignments. The system provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff to improve their effectiveness. The system ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

### Indicators Rubric

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system's responses to the focus questions.

INDICATORS		Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the system:</b>					
<b>Human Resources</b>					
5.1	Establishes and implements processes to recruit, employ, retain, and mentor qualified professional and support staff to fulfill assigned roles and responsibilities				X
5.2	Establishes and implements a process to assign professional and support staff based on system needs and staff qualifications as may be required by federal and state law and regulations (i.e., professional preparation, ability, knowledge, and experience)				X
5.3	Establishes and implements a process to design, evaluate, and improve professional development and ensures participation by all faculty and staff			X	
5.4	Ensures that staff are sufficient in number to meet the vision and purpose of the school system and to meet federal and state law and regulations, if applicable				X
<b>Financial Resources</b>					
5.5	Engages in long-range budgetary planning and annually budgets sufficient resources to support its educational programs and to implement its plans for improvement				X
5.6	Ensures that all financial transactions are safeguarded through proper budgetary procedures and audited accounting measures				X

	<b>Physical Resources</b>				
5.7	Maintains sites, facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, orderly, and healthy environment				X
5.8	Establishes and implements written security and crisis management plans with appropriate training for stakeholders				X
5.9	Implements processes and plans for maintaining and improving sites, facilities, and equipment				X
5.10	Provides technology infrastructure and equipment that is up-to-date and sufficient to accomplish the system's goals				X
	<b>Support Systems</b>				
5.11	Provides and coordinates support services that meet the health, counseling, nutrition, safety, co-curricular, transportation, and special learning needs of all students				X
5.12	Provides student support services coordinated with the school, home, and community				X

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### Focus Questions

Please respond to the following questions regarding the processes that are in place to support the school system's implementation of the research-based practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school system's self-assessment on the indicators rubric. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

1. What is the school system's process for recruitment, induction, placement, development, evaluation, and retention of qualified professional and support staff across the system and its schools?

The prime focus of PCS is to provide quality instruction by highly-qualified personnel, and the main goal of the human resources department is to recruit and retain highly-qualified personnel in all positions. To that end, the system uses the TeachGeorgia electronic application system for certified personnel and an additional online application system for classified employees. The Personnel Director establishes the job opening and requisite qualifications for the position and then advertises the opening. Applications are reviewed and screened by the Personnel Department to determine that applicants meet necessary qualifications and then forwarded to the appropriate departments/schools where applicants are interviewed by the principal or department director. Recommendations are made and names are submitted to the BOE for approval.

Once approved for employment, employees receive induction training for their particular job category. Certified personnel attend a new teacher orientation session and also a training session for

the teacher evaluation program. Practicums and mentors are designated for those teachers who are in need of support during their initial year of employment.

Professional development is largely school based, except for those initiatives that have been designated as a systemwide need. Each school receives a prorated share of professional learning funds. The expenditures of these funds are controlled by the needs identified in the school improvement plan. Schools are engaged in developing professional learning communities, and all schools have established a Better Seekers Team (BST), whose mission is to examine current data and practices and make recommendations to the principal for ways to implement positive change. To ensure that retention rates remain high, the system encourages collaborative decision-making that allows input from all sectors, and principals undergo a performance survey which provides data on the morale of the faculty and perception data on leadership within the school.

To provide unity of vision and of purpose, the district leadership team meets monthly, and the principals and superintendent meet in an additional monthly meeting to discuss issues and ensure that all schools are working for the same goals and purpose.

As incentives to remain in the system, certified employees received a local supplement of 10% above state base salaries. Classified employees receive a longevity supplement for remaining in the system. In addition other incentives, such as life insurance, health insurance (single coverage), and TSA opportunities, are provided for all employees. There is also a BOE adopted grievance procedure to assist in conflict resolution.

2. How does the leadership ensure that the allocation of financial resources is supportive of the school system's vision, programs, services, and its plans for continuous improvement?

The Pickens County School System employs highly qualified staff supported by the financial resources necessary to fulfill the school system's vision statement, mission, and beliefs. The annual budget of PCS is prepared according to Georgia law. The superintendent, the CFO, district level administrative personnel, and school building leadership meet collaboratively to establish a budget that is based on system priorities. After a tentative budget is assembled by the CFO, the superintendent meets with the local board in budget workshops that are open to the public. This provides the public a means to have input into the budgeting process. Additional hearings, as required by law, are held when the millage rate is set. State, local and federal financial resources are distributed to individual schools based on enrollment projections, programs and FTE count. Four elementary schools and two middle schools receive Title I funding based on the student population. The funds supplement the local and state allocation of funds and are used to fund needs identified in the school improvement plan of each school.

3. How does the school system ensure, support, and monitor the provision of resource and support services that meet the needs of all students?

Incorporated into the mission statement of PCS is the mandate to be fiscally responsible. To realize that mandate, the superintendent and the CFO provides the local board with a monthly update of expenditures, revenues, and information on the percentage of the budget expended to date. Also included is information about SPLOST expenditures and other M&O/capital outlay projects. The reports are available to the public on the PCS website so that financial information is transparent to the public.

The district undergoes yearly auditing of all finances, and district programs receive compliance monitoring from DOE/USDOE as scheduled by the state. Through monthly monitoring of budgets and expenditures, the CFO conducts internal controls in order to ensure compliance. Yearly, each school's budget is reviewed, and recommendations are made concerning the addition/cessation of programs or personnel. The local board has been open to using local resources to fund identified needs that exceed the minimum funding allocated by the state.

## Stakeholder Communications & Relationships

**STANDARD: The system fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.**

Impact Statement: A system is successful in meeting this standard when it has the understanding, commitment, and support of stakeholders. System and school personnel seek opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership among stakeholders to help students learn and advance improvement efforts.

### Indicators Rubric

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system's responses to the focus questions.

<b>INDICATORS</b>		Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the system:</b>					
6.1	Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning			X	
6.2	Uses system-wide strategies to listen to and communicate with stakeholders				X
6.3	Solicits the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance the work of the system				X
6.4	Communicates the expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to all stakeholders			X	
6.5	Provides information that is meaningful and useful to stakeholders				X

### Definitions

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Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

### Focus Questions

Please respond to the following questions regarding the processes that are in place to support the school system's implementation of the research-based practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school system's self-assessment on the indicators rubric. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

1. How does the school system's leadership ensure that the system and its schools are responsive to community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction?

In a small community such as Pickens County the relationship between the school system and the community is a very close one. The school is very integrated into the lives of all residents, and traditionally, PCS has had strong support from all stakeholder groups. This has been accomplished by a number of channels. The primary channel has been communication between home and school. The local newspaper has been supportive by providing a whole section dedicated to school news, sports, and recognitions. In addition to routine coverage, the paper covers all BOE meetings, providing the populace with gavel-to-gavel coverage. The district and each school, plus most teachers, maintain web pages to provide news. Input into the school improvement plan and school governance is sought through advisory committees at the district and at each school, plus each school has an advisory council comprised of parents and business representatives from the area. Many schools have additional business partners who also partner with them in meeting the needs of students whether it is in the area of material needs or in the area of student support, such as tutoring or mentoring. The BOE maintains a public forum whereby stakeholders may address issues of concern, and the leadership maintains an "open door" policy to allow stakeholders to present issues of concern. From time to time, *ad hoc* committees of stakeholders have been formed to address specific limited issues.

2. What avenues are used to communicate information to stakeholders about the effectiveness of the school system and its schools, including the sharing of student performance results?

In addition to the usual parent reports of student progress, e.g. report cards, progress reports, attendance letters, etc., PCS posts test results on the district website and also reports the results in the local newspaper. The AYP results are also reported in the newspaper and on the website so that parents and other community stakeholders are informed of school progress. Recognitions and awards are celebrated at BOE meeting in a regular portion of the agenda, and the recognitions/awards are also posted on the website. Each school also holds monthly recognitions of student performance, such as attendance, grades, student-of-the-month, etc.

## Commitment to Continuous Improvement

**STANDARD: The system establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.**

Impact Statement: A system is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns the functions of the system with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained and the system and its schools demonstrate progress in improving student performance. New improvement efforts are informed by the results of earlier efforts through analysis of student performance, system effectiveness, and assessment of the improvement process.

### Indicators Rubric

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school system. The responses to the rubric should help the school system identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school system’s responses to the focus questions.

<b>INDICATORS</b>		<b>Not Evident</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Operational</b>	<b>Highly Functional</b>
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the system:</b>					
7.1	Engages in a continuous process of improvement that articulates the vision and purpose the system is pursuing (Vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, system effectiveness, and the community (Profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (Plan); and documents and uses the results to inform future improvement efforts (Results)			X	
7.2	Engages stakeholders in the processes of continuous improvement			X	
7.3	Ensures that each school’s plan for continuous improvement is aligned with the system’s vision and expectations for student learning			X	
7.4	Ensures that each school’s plan for continuous improvement includes a focus on increasing learning for all students and closing gaps between current and expected student performance levels				X
7.5	Provides research-based professional development for system and school personnel to help them achieve improvement goals			X	
7.6	Monitors and communicates the results of improvement efforts to stakeholders			X	
7.7	Evaluates and documents the effectiveness and impact of its continuous process of improvement			X	

7.8	Allocates and protects time for planning and engaging in continuous improvement efforts system-wide				X
7.9	Provides direction and assistance to its schools and operational units to support their continuous improvement efforts				X

### Definitions

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Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

### Focus Questions

Please respond to the following questions regarding the processes that are in place to support the school system’s implementation of the research-based practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school system’s self-assessment on the indicators rubric. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

1. Describe the process for continuous improvement used by the school system and its schools and the impact of this process on student learning and system effectiveness.

PCS has adopted the Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards (GAPSS) as its process for continuous improvement. The GAPSS process is aligned with the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) which is the state curriculum, and it looks at eight strands, analyzing success and best practices in the following areas: (1) Curriculum; (2) Instruction; (3) Assessment; (4) Planning and Organization; (5) Student, Family, & Community Support; (6) Professional Learning; (7) Leadership; and (8) School Culture. Visiting GAPSS teams provide a profile of observed practices in the aforementioned eight areas, and produce a report for each school. The reports for the seven schools in the system are combined to produce a system profile within the eight areas. Areas of weaker performance are identified and targeted for improvement by the system. These school visits are conducted at least once every five years by outside teams. During the interim time, leadership teams at the school level observe for the eight areas, assess progress, and set goals for the school improvement plan which are incorporated into the system improvement plan.

2. What process is used to ensure that the improvement goals reflect student learning needs and are aligned with the vision and purpose of the school system and its schools?

At the system level, data on student performance and the school system’s effectiveness is analyzed at the end of each school year. Analysis is performed across individual schools, across curriculum areas, across grade levels, and also disaggregated for subgroups and special populations. Goals and objectives in the System Improvement Plan and policies/procedures are compared to the data to seek alignment. Monthly leadership team and principal meetings are held for updates, information exchange and to make adjustments to meet our system vision.

3. What process is used to ensure that system and school personnel are provided professional development and technical assistance to implement interventions and achieve improvement goals?

Each school within the system receives a prorated share of professional learning funds to implement their individual school improvement plans. Professional learning is identified within the individual plan, linked to school goals, and approved by the district as being in alignment with system goals. Systemwide needs in professional learning are funded at the district level and stipends or release time is made available for staff to participate in these district initiatives. Professional learning activities emphasize continuous and sustained activities to promote and establish changes in practices.

4. How does the leadership ensure that the improvement plan is implemented, monitored, achieved, and communicated to stakeholders?

Yearly, the superintendent reports progress to the local board, and uses data to support changes in goals and expenditures. Progress is reported to the public in the reporting of AYP results in the local newspaper and on the system website. Test scores comparing the system to area and state totals is also reported on the website. School level reports are also made by principals to their respective advisory councils.

## Peer-to-Peer Practice Submission

### Instructions

As part of this Standards Assessment Report, you are required to submit an online peer-to-peer practice to the AdvancED Resource Network. Please go to [www.advanced.org/resourcenetwork](http://www.advanced.org/resourcenetwork), click on Submit a Practice, and follow the instructions provided.

Please attach the PDF of your peer-to-peer practice submission to this document for submission to the QAR Team Chair and State Office.

### Background

A peer-to-peer practice is a description of interventions, strategies, programs, or activities that have been identified by a school/district to be effective. It includes practices that support classroom teachers and/or schools/districts in their efforts to improve student learning.

Examples of practices that have been submitted include:

- **Classroom improvements**  
*Sample practices submitted:* Atlas Mapping Skills, Buddy Reading Groups, Student Folders/Portfolios
- **School improvements**  
*Sample practices submitted:* Collaborative planning, after-school tutoring, academy programs for freshmen and sophomores, etc.
- **District/system improvements**  
*Sample practices submitted:* 6+1 Writing Traits, Implementing School Improvement; Career Development

The submission form asks for the following information:

- Name of the practice; contact information for the practice
- Description of the practice
- Reason for the practice
- Subject areas, grade levels, student groups, and adult groups –to which the practice applies
- Length of implementation of the practice
- Resources needed for implementation
- Research that supports the practice
- Conclusion

As you identify a practice for submission, you may want to ask some basic questions. Does the potential practice have: 1) a defined problem or specific reason why you implemented the practice; 2) a research base or a research-based premise; and 3) documented results? If the answers to these questions are yes, you have a good practice to submit.

Submitting a practice allows the district to highlight a practice that it feels is indicative of the quality work occurring in the district. The practice is included in the online AdvancED Resource Network where it can be accessed by other practitioners using the network.

# Conclusion

## Focus Questions

Please respond to the following focus questions. The questions reflect the school system's overall analysis of their internal evaluation of the accreditation standards.

1. As you review your responses to the standards, what major trends, themes, or areas of focus emerge that cut across the seven standards?

The overarching theme cutting across all seven standards is that decisions and changes in practice to effect school improvement must be data driven. Moreover, there must be broad spectrum support from the community and school governance bodies, and to obtain that support, there must be the opportunity for all stakeholders to have input. There is the need to analyze the data and conduct a root-cause analysis of problems so that resources are not squandered on cosmetic issues that may not truly effect improvement. Finally, there is a need to organize and present the data, the problems, and the proposed solutions in an orderly format that is easily understood by all.

2. Based on your review of these cross-cutting themes/trends and each of the seven standards, what would you consider to be your school system's greatest strengths?

PCS is fortunate to have the support of the local board, and there is a unity of purpose between the goals of the governance body and the identified needs of the system. We have district and school leaders that are enthusiastic and energetic about school improvement, and they welcome the opportunity to always move forward. All of our school leaders are instructional leaders as well as operational managers, and provide direct leadership in improving student performance. Most importantly, we function as a holistic entity. Collaboration, community, collegiality, and caring are key elements in our day-to-day operations, and these concepts keep us focused on unity of purpose, as they also keep energy levels and morale high.

3. What would you consider to be your school system's greatest challenges?

Like other schools across the nation, we face the challenge of closing the achievement gap between the members of traditionally lower-performing subgroups with their traditionally higher-performing counterparts. That is part of a larger challenge of increasing the achievement of all students. Continuing to do more with finite resources is also an issue of concern, especially as an aging population turns its attention to other needs outside of education.

4. How will you use the insights gained from this self-assessment to inform and enhance your quality assurance and continuous improvement efforts?

There is always a need for objective observation to clarify purposes and goals. The self-assessment document has caused us to look comprehensively at the system in totality and has provided opportunities to assess areas that are not always in the forefront of awareness. Most importantly, through the self-assessment, the system has focused on the process of how we operate and how all seven standards operate in unison to achieve our goals.