

## **BOARD AGENDA ITEM**

**December 10, 2013**

### **SUBJECT:**

AdvancED Accreditation Progress Report

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The Accreditation Progress Report (APR) is a critical component of the AdvancED accreditation process. It engages the district in a detailed review and analysis of the steps it has taken to address the required actions made by the AdvancED Quality Assurance Review (QAR) team. Completing the report helps the district/system focus and reflect on its continuous improvement efforts.

It is the responsibility of the district to address each of the QAR report's required actions within the 5-year term accreditation. Deadlines for completion of the report are based on the district's accreditation status and must be met to maintain accreditation. Some districts may complete multiple reports during the 5-year term to demonstrate that they have fully addressed the required actions.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATION:**

At the conclusion of the 2009 AdvancED Quality Assurance Review (QAR), Aiken County Public Schools began immediately to address the recommendations submitted by the team. Actions included making adjustments to the strategic plan, the five-year facilities plan, and the five-year technology plan. We have also studied our approach to providing instructional services and have moved toward more consistency in delivery for special education students, gifted and talented students, and English language learners; a common curriculum aligned to Common Core State Standards is also being established and implemented district-wide. The details of these actions are included in the Accreditation Progress Report.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Receive as information

### **ATTACHMENT:**

AdvancED Accreditation Progress Report

### **PREPARED BY:**

King Laurence  
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**Aiken Count Public School District  
Accreditation Progress Report  
Accreditation Status: Accredited  
December 1, 2013**

**Summary**

**1. Based on the actions taken by your institution to address the required actions provided by the QAR team, what has been the impact on your institution's overall effectiveness?**

The QAR Team's report has provided guidance for short-range and long-range planning, which has helped to improve the district's overall effectiveness. The district has used the information from the report to provide direction for committees as they meet and plan to better serve the students of Aiken County. Details of these improvements are included in this report.

**2. What would you consider to be challenges that still lie ahead and how do you plan to address those challenges?**

The main challenge for the district is overcoming the reduction of state and federal funds, and this has provided the biggest financial obstacle in meeting the needs of the district's facilities.

In May of 2010, a proposed \$236 million bond referendum failed. The bond was going to address the six neediest schools and include major renovations and additions at two large high schools. If the bond referendum had passed, the district would have been able to use additional dollars from bonds that are issued within the State's legal debt limit to address the needs of other facilities.

In an effort to overcome this challenge and provide additional funds to upgrade the district's facilities, the school board appointed a board subcommittee to explore funding options and make recommendations to the school board for alternative funding.

Additionally, the base student cost for 2013-2014 is \$2,101, while it is \$89 higher than the 2012-2013 base student cost of \$2,012, it is \$375 less than the base student cost that was funded in 2007-2008.

**3. How will you use the insights gained from your accreditation activities to inform and enhance your quality assurance and school improvement efforts?**

The AdvancED process for district accreditation has helped the district in designing a more coherent transition plan for district improvement. The AdvancED process has changed the way the district communicates and involves teachers when making major instructional decisions. The process of utilizing focus groups, involving stakeholders, and following up with input surveys are common practices within the district.

This process is currently being used in the district's development of a common curriculum for all core subjects in grades Pre-K through twelve that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards. The district's Curriculum Instruction Assessment Team is responsible for developing the common curriculum and for providing professional development for the curriculum. Additionally, a cadre of 600 teachers meets monthly to create a bank of assessment items that can be used by all teachers. Following each principals' meeting and each early release Wednesday, teachers and administrators provide feedback through online surveys on the professional development initiated by the CIA Team.

### **Required Action**

*Develop, implement, and communicate a district-wide framework to ensure the consistent implementation of the core curriculum across the school district.*

### **Evidence**

*While the district has initiated a praiseworthy program to establish goals, objectives, and assessments for the core curriculum at all schools, several staff members noted that some areas do not know and understand the curriculum change and improvement process. Some schools visited by the team, and individual subject area teachers, are well aware of the plan and process of reform while others indicated they were aware of curriculum change but not actively engaged in the process and could not articulate the structure or timeline for implementation.*

### **Rationale**

*Initiating a core curriculum development and improvement process across the entire district requires consistent and effective communication with all stakeholders and the monitoring of implementation to ensure widespread involvement and knowledge of the process components and procedures for adopting these changes.*

### **School Response**

#### **Progress Status**

Completed

*Please summarize the actions taken to address this required action. Describe how the actions were **evaluated** to determine success. Summarize the **evidence** that the school has gathered to support its fulfillment of the required action.*

In the winter of 2012, the district began developing a common curriculum that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards. At this time all standards have been addressed, and curriculum teams continue to meet quarterly with the Curriculum Instruction Assessment Team to revise and expand the curriculum at every grade span, analyze the Common Core State Standards, and increase the bank of assessment items that are used by all teachers. Currently, all teachers in grades Pre-K through eight are implementing the Common Core State Standards. When this four-year initiative is complete, it will provide a curriculum and pacing guides for all English/language arts, math, science, and social studies courses in grades Pre-K through twelve. A link to the curriculum and timeline for this project is on the school district's website, [www.aiken.k12.sc.us](http://www.aiken.k12.sc.us).

The district's Curriculum Instruction Assessment (CIA) Team provides monthly training and materials on the curriculum to principals and their instructional assistants. After principals receive training and materials from the CIA team, principals and their assistants provide curriculum training to their teachers on Early Release Wednesday, which is the first Wednesday of each month. Following each training session, principals, their instructional assistants, and teachers provide feedback to the district by responding to an online survey that evaluates the quality and effectiveness of the professional development. Responses to those surveys are reviewed by district and school administrators so that future professional development can be structured to better meet the needs of the district's teachers. Professional development agendas and online survey results provide evidence of the quality of professional development and the district's implementation and evaluation of its common curriculum.

The district's four academic officers lead the Common Core State Standards transition for their assigned schools. They develop and facilitate professional development for their assigned grade spans, focus on the instruction in their grade span of schools, devote two days per week for coaching teachers, monitoring classrooms, and providing instructional feedback to principals. These classroom observations ensure that teachers are following the district's pacing guides, utilizing the district's common curriculum, addressing the Common Core State Standards, and applying rigor and relevance to their teaching. Additionally, the academic officers meet bi-monthly with the district's academic leadership team and superintendent's cabinet to discuss curriculum implementation and instructional best practices. Site visit observation documents and principal meeting, instructional leadership team, and superintendent's cabinet agendas and minutes provide documentation of the district's efforts to implement its common curriculum.