



# **Accreditation Progress Report**

## **Vestavia Hills City School System**

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## **Introduction**

The Accreditation Progress Report provides this institution the opportunity to engage in a structured continuous improvement process to review, analyze, reflect, and report on progress it has made subsequent to the External Review. Additionally, the process facilitates ongoing professional learning, collaboration, and cooperation among the institution's staff and key stakeholders in identifying and articulating progress made in the areas most in need of improvement.

As such, this Accreditation Progress Report is the summary of this institution's focused improvement efforts, actions, and activities that demonstrate how it has addressed Improvement Priorities resulting from an AdvancED External Review. AdvancED uses the report to assess the progress this institution is making in improving its impact on teaching and learning, leadership capacity, and use of resources.

This Accreditation Progress Report includes the analysis and response by AdvancED to the institution's self-reported progress. Based on the findings in this report AdvancED re-assesses this institution's accreditation status. This determination is communicated through a formal letter from AdvancED and includes next steps, if appropriate, in the process.

### About AdvancED

AdvancED® provides accreditation and school improvement services that are supported by state-of-the-art educational technologies, policy and advocacy outreach, education research and innovation to education providers of all types to create a world of opportunities for every learner. AdvancED works with over 32,000 institutions in more than 70 countries serving over 20 million students. AdvancED is the parent organization for the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI).

# Progress Assessment

## Improvement Priority 1

### Statement:

Develop a district wide plan that ensures a continuous improvement process for vertical and horizontal alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to enable student success.

### Description:

In interviews with faculty and administrators, the External Review Team identified the need for more defined articulation between grades, subject areas, and schools. An informal process was evident at some schools, and between some school sites. The absence of a specifically defined goal of establishing and maintaining communication opportunities between teachers of different grades within the same school, and between personnel of different schools indicates insufficient emphasis on the important curriculum and instruction connectedness. Vertical and horizontal alignment helps to ensure that the district's defined curriculum does not limit student achievement or learning potential.

### 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.

## Institution Response

### Progress Status:

Implemented

### Response:

Since March 2014, VHCS has taken significant steps to develop a district-wide plan to ensure a continuous improvement process for vertical and horizontal alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessments to enable student success (See attachment – PDP 2014-16 Tying It All Together). Through continuous improvement efforts and an updated strategic planning process we have seen the following:

1. Professional Learning Communities are being developed and/or strengthened not only at the direction of system-level coordination but from the teacher level,

which has created an environment in which more ownership for the alignment has been taken at by all.

2. The VHCS Strategic Plan developed during the 2014-15 reflects the value of the learning community and community in general to align common learning experiences, strategies, and assessments.

3. A strengthened level of engagement and ownership by teachers and administrators has occurred as evidenced by the volume of professional learning that we have entitled Design It Yourself (DIY), in which subject and grade levels are now designing, working together, and implementing teaching and learning strategies to provide for the alignment of curriculum, teaching practices, and assessments of learning.

4. Leading by Learning, an initiative started by one of our teachers who is also Alabama's Teacher of the Year, has grown to include strong groups of teachers in every school and throughout the system to create opportunities for peer observation, discussion, and implementation of best practices in teaching and learning.

5. Various groups of teachers and administrators have been involved a book study and initiative of The Growth Mindset by Carol Dweck. This was started as a grassroots effort by a group of teachers to encourage its primary concept of further building the capacity for excellence and success through hard work and and dedication. This has spurred a renewed energy for a love of learning throughout the school system and is fully supported to encourage the next level of professionalism.

6. Professional Learning Units for administrators has focused on closing the teaching gap and the art of instructional coaching.

7. The VHCS College- and Career- Ready Standards (CCRS) team continues to be active in turning around professional development provided at the state level to ensure alignment of teaching and learning methods used with state standards.

8. vXchange, our annual transformation professional learning day for all faculty and staff, continues to evolve to ensure relevance to teachers and staff. It is a day dedicated to teacher-designed learning in which innovation, collaboration, and engagement is encouraged.

9. Multiple opportunities have been provided to allow both middle school faculties to come together to plan and design aligned experiences for our middle school students.

#### VHCS:

- hosted a middle school summit,
- provided professional learning focused on each content area,
- engaged a team of teachers in the Powerful Conversations Network and the book study of Leaders of Their Own Learning through the Alabama Best Practices Center,
- professional development titled "In This Together" – a collaborative opportunity on instructional strategies, learning targets, assessment practices, instructional rounds, and technology.

#### Attachments:

VHCS PDP 2014-16

VHCS Strategic Plan 2015-19

**Reviewer Response****Status:**

Accept

**Response:**

The system has sufficiently addressed the recommendation of the External Review Team. AdvancED commends the system for the steps it has taken to address the recommendation of the External Review Team to develop a district wide plan that ensures a continuous improvement process for vertical and horizontal alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to enable student success. The district is encouraged to monitor its ongoing activities to ensure that the actions taken to address this recommendation are sustained over time.

**Diagnostic/Evaluation Criteria**

Name	Statement or Question	Source of Evidence	Initial Performance Level	Updated Performance Level
Standards Diagnostic	Leadership at all levels of the system implement a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Accreditation Report</li></ul>	2.00	3.00

## Goals Summary

The following is a summary of the goals encompassed in this plan. The details for each goal are available in the next section.

#	Goal Name	Goal Details	Goal Type	Total Funding
1	Increase the level of vertical and horizontal alignment of curriculum and common assessments throughout the district	Objectives: 1 Strategies: 1 Activities: 1	Organizational	\$10000



## Goal 1: Increase the level of vertical and horizontal alignment of curriculum and common assessments throughout the district

### Measurable Objective 1:

collaborate to develop and implement writing and reading continuums by 12/19/2014 as measured by implementation and use in grades K-12.

### Strategy 1:

Continuum development - Two committees, one for reading and one for writing, will plan and develop continuums for each area based on the College and Career Ready Standards for grades K-12.

Category:

Research Cited: College and Career Ready Standards

The Common Core Lesson Book by Gretchen Owocki

The Common Core Writing Book by Gretchen Owocki

Pathways to the Common Core by Calkins, Ehrenworth, and Lehman

The Common Core Companion: The Standards Decoded by Jim Burke

Units of Study by Lucy Calkins

With Rigor For All by Carol Jago

Teaching Argument Writing by George Hillocks, Jr.

Activity - Continuum development	Activity Type	Begin Date	End Date	Resource Assigned	Source Of Funding	Staff Responsible
A series of work sessions will be scheduled to develop the reading and writing continuums for implementation in ELA K-12. Schools: All Schools	Professional Learning	02/17/2014	12/19/2014	\$10000	Other	Directors of Curriculum and Instruction

## Improvement Priority 2

### Statement:

Revise the Strategic Plan to include specific instructional strategies to ensure a clear focus on reducing the achievement gaps within identified subgroups.

### Description:

While evidence from interviews suggests that subgroups are addressed at the local schools, trend data show that the achievement gaps for some subgroups continue to increase. The reference to at-risk students in the Strategic Plan is limited and does not adequately address achievement gaps. Devising a more detailed plan to specifically target the achievement gaps would more effectively deal with this issue and ensure academic success and readiness for the next level for all students.

### Indicator 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.

## Institution Response

### Progress Status:

Implemented

### Response:

During the 2014-15 school year, VHCS engaged in a thorough strategic planning process. As is reflected in our Strategic Plan (attached):

3.6 Coordinated professional development to improve identification of student needs and utilize intervention strategies

- Align PST (Problem Solving Team) processes for collaboration across schools for strength and consistency
- Promote knowledge and use of appropriate intervention programs and tiered instruction
- Provide continual training in the collection, analysis, and use of data to identify student needs
- Provide continual training in the collection, analysis, and use of data to improve instructional practices

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The following professional development has been provided to our faculty and staff:

- Jade Wexler, nationally-recognized expert on differentiation, was brought in on two occasions to provide training for our secondary general education and special education teachers on RTI strategies.
- Do the Math (by Marilyn Burns) intervention training was provided for assistant principals, instructional coaches, and interventionists specific to Tier III strategies.
- College- and Career- Ready Standards (CCRS) training for elementary special education teachers has been provided.
- Effective co-teaching practices with Marilyn Friend has been provided for targeted elementary and secondary teachers and administrators.
- Dyslexia training has been provided for directors, principals, assistant principals and teachers.

Imbedded in all continuous planning and alignment, assessment, etc. conversations for teaching the standards, has been discussion of interventions for at-risk students and best implementation practices.

Two resource specialists were hired to provide support particularly in the area of the identification of students at risk and the development and implementation of plans for students in need of intervention.

The position of Director of Student Services was revised and an individual was hired with a counseling background to provide a strengthened program of service to students at risk.

A continuum of services and support is being strengthened through training and closing gaps in services to students at risk academically and/or behaviorally.

### Attachments:

VHCS Strategic Plan 2015-19

VHCS Professional Development Continuum

## Reviewer Response

### Status:

Accept

### Response:

The district has taken the necessary steps to address the recommendation made by the External Review Team. As outlined in the district's response, the system has demonstrated its ability to effectively mobilize its efforts to respond to external direction for the benefit of the district and its students to revise the Strategic Plan to include specific instructional strategies to ensure a clear focus on reducing the achievement gaps within identified subgroups. District efforts to address this recommendation include training in Do the Math, Effective Co-teaching, Dyslexia, and CCRS standards. A Director of Student Services position was also created to

help address this area. AdvancED concurs that this recommendation has been completed and encourages the district to continue its work in this area.

**Diagnostic/Evaluation Criteria**

Name	Statement or Question	Source of Evidence	Initial Performance Level	Updated Performance Level
Standards Diagnostic	The school system engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Accreditation Report</li></ul>	2.00	3.00
Student Performance Evaluation	Quality of Learning		4.00	4.00

## Goals Summary

The following is a summary of the goals encompassed in this plan. The details for each goal are available in the next section.

#	Goal Name	Goal Details	Goal Type	Total Funding
1	Revision of Strategic Plan	Objectives: 1 Strategies: 1 Activities: 1	Academic	\$0

## Goal 1: Revision of Strategic Plan

### Measurable Objective 1:

80% of Black or African-American, Students with Disabilities and English Learners students will demonstrate a proficiency on standardized test measurements in all content areas assessed in Reading by 05/27/2016 as measured by annual standardized test measurements.

### Strategy 1:

Intervention - Teachers will receive professional development and have time to study and implement research-based instructional strategies focused on closing achievement gaps within the identified subgroups of students. The Strategic Plan will address action steps for targeted intervention to ensure the academic success of all students.

Category: Other - Intervention

Activity - Targeted and Tiered Intervention	Activity Type	Begin Date	End Date	Resource Assigned	Source Of Funding	Staff Responsible
Multiple methods of addressing the need for more targeted intervention to ensure the success of all students will be implemented by the school system.  Schools: All Schools	Professional Learning	04/01/2014	08/01/2018	\$0	General Fund	Teachers, school building leaders, and district-level administrators