

## **Garrard County Schools Receive Recognition for Accreditation Status**

In the fall of 2009, Garrard County Schools became accredited for the first time as a district by AdvancEd, a world-wide organization that accredits schools, school districts, colleges and universities. Prior to that all schools had been individually accredited. For several months last year, school and district leaders, along with the Board of Education of Garrard County Schools, were faithfully engaged in the process of district accreditation renewal or “re-accreditation” that must take place every five years to ensure continuous improvement in the quality of the school system and its schools.

School systems seeking to gain accreditation must meet AdvancED standards specified for their organization, demonstrate high levels of student performance, and provide evidence of stakeholder satisfaction with the operation of the school system. The accreditation standards focus on conditions and processes within a system that impact student performance and organizational effectiveness. The power of accreditation lies in the connections between and among the standards, student performance, and stakeholder feedback.

Their hard work and effort was rewarded on Tuesday, Jan. 13 when a representative with AdvancED, presented Paul Mullins, Garrard County Schools Superintendent with mementos and a plaque officially recognizing this district accomplishment.

“Our students, staff, parents, community stakeholders and Board of Education should be very proud of this notable accomplishment,” says Superintendent Mullins. “Receiving AdvancED accreditation will positively impact the future economic development and success of the Garrard County community. The quality of the local school systems is among the most important factors considered when businesses investigate prospective places in which to locate.”

Garrard County Schools received a letter from AdvancED confirming re-accreditation and stating, “Garrard County School District has been awarded Continuing Accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS-CASI). Your efforts and associated accreditation signify your commitment to educational excellence. You can take pride in your achievement and so can your community.”

The AdvancED Accreditation Commission has determined that Garrard County Schools “meets the Accreditation Standards for a Quality School System, engages in a continuous systemic process of educational improvement, and has effective and efficient quality assurance controls throughout the system and its schools.”

Within the report, the AdvancED Accreditation Team lists “powerful practices” they found during their external review of Garrard County Schools including:

- The vision, mission, and beliefs are revised annually in a process that involves all representative stakeholder groups, which has launched activities contributing to a renewed spirit of “expecting the best” for all students throughout the district.
- The leadership of Garrard County Schools engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system’s purpose and direction.

- The district provides multiple means of assuring that every student is known by at least one adult mentor who supports and is engaged in their education.

The external review team also listed “opportunities for improvement” which focused on developing the kind of instructional strategies that will promote challenging learning opportunities to engage students in learning skills, thinking skills and life skills in each course/class throughout the system that lead to success at the next level.

“I’ve been challenged by our Board from the beginning to maintain the standards of excellence in Garrard County. This Board is not only informed, but they are also very involved in the forward progress of our district. They have set goals for me which specifically address the ‘opportunities for improvement’ stated in the report, with the intent that Garrard County Schools will be a top performing district in the state,” stated Superintendent Mullins.

“Garrard County Schools has a long tradition of academic and operational excellence and this accreditation is a testament to that legacy, the leadership of current and former Board members, as well as the hard work of school/district staff, parents and students of Garrard County.”