Accreditation – The voluntary process by which an educational institution invites an expert panel to evaluate its operations and practices against a set of fixed measures. To be accredited, the institution must meet a comprehensive set of objective quality and professional standards, subject itself to periodic review, and implement appropriate improvement plans.

Action Plan - Describes which improvement strategies/interventions will be implemented. An effective action plan assigns objectives, timeframes, and staff to particular tasks, along with evaluative measures of success.

Activity - An individual task or function performed as part of an overall strategy for instruction or improvement.

Aggregate – Data combined from several groups or measurements.

APR (Accreditation Progress Report) – An interim report submitted to AdvancED by one of its accredited institutions. The report summarizes the institution's responses and progress to required actions made during the Quality Assurance Review.

Assessment (Formative) - Ongoing assessment (district, school and classroom level) used to modify and improve instruction while it is in progress. Examples include informal observation, quizzes, homework, worksheets, daily assignments, performance assessments, scoring rubrics, activities.

Assessment (Summative) - Assessment that evaluates what students have learned after instruction is completed. Examples include tests, final exams, and culminating projects. The information is often used in determining a grade, placement, or promotion.

ASSIST (Adaptive System of School Improvement Support Tools) – A state-of-the-art system, comprised of ten sophisticated modules, which allows schools to streamline and enhance their efforts to boost student achievement while ensuring compliance with state, federal, and organizational requirements.

Assurance – A declaration made by an educational institution that indicates its compliance and/or completion of various tasks and requirements.

Cohort - A group of individuals having a statistical factor (as age or class membership) in common in a demographic study.

Continuous School Improvement - The processes and practices that move schools along a path towards increased student achievement and organizational effectiveness. A set of operational activities outlining the targets, actions, and resources necessary for effective teaching and learning is included. It is a process that is owned by everyone involved in the life of the school.
**Curriculum** - A defined scope and sequence of what students will learn and be able to do in all content areas throughout their educational experience.

**Curriculum Alignment** - The process of ensuring that a school and district’s stated curriculum is taught and assessed, is aligned with state academic standards, and is consistent in all grade levels and subject areas, both horizontally and vertically.

**Data-Based Decision Making** - The practice of ensuring all operational and academic decisions are based on an institution’s past performance information. A disciplined approach to reviewing, utilizing and evaluating data is used.

**Data Driven Culture** - An organizational condition in which data is continuously shared, presented, and utilized.

**Diagnostic** - A tool or method that assesses conditions in order to make informed decisions.

**Disaggregation** – The practice of separating the results of different groups of students and analyzing their performance on outcomes. Typical disaggregation categories are gender, ethnicity, special needs, and socioeconomic status.

**Evidence** – A set of facts that is used to support a given conclusion.

**Executive Institutional Summary (EIS)** - A document that gives schools an opportunity to tell their stories, to describe the context—both strengths and challenges—so that the public and members of the school community have a more complete picture of how the school perceives itself and what it is deliberating as it engages in the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement.

**Goal** - The end result or desired conditions to be achieved. Goals should be:
- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Research based
- Time Sensitive

**Improvement Report** – A document that encompasses the Improvement Plan (goals, measureable objectives, strategies, and activities), Vision/Mission/Belief statement, and required assurances.

**Improvement Plan** – A document that sets forth the goals, measureable objectives, strategies, activities, and allocated resources to be strategically implemented by the educational institution in its efforts to improve academic and operational performance.

**Indicator** - A measure that is used to determine the level of quality achieved by the educational institution. The indicator may be related to either a process or an outcome.
Instructional Activities - Actions carried out in the process of teaching a given curricular standard/benchmark/content expectation and as a result of design, delivery, and assessment of an instructional goal.

Learning Community - A place where critical inquiry and discussion is practiced by collegial partners who share a common vision and engage in shared decision-making.

Measureable Objective – A statement of a desired outcome that is student focused, linked to a particular goal and content area, and states who will be able to do what, by when, as measured by what.

Milestone - A significant event in the life of a project or improvement plan.

Mission Statement - A precise and concise statement that identifies the priorities and educational beliefs of a school or district in terms of student performance and behavioral expectations. It serves as a road map and guide, defines the direction and purpose for the school, and is typically developed in consultation with key stakeholders.

Organizational Effectiveness - An organization's progress toward fulfilling its objectives and meeting established performance criteria. Typically, this term is defined broadly for educational institutions and extends beyond student performance alone to include other services, governance, and administrative issues.

Performance Data - Evidence gathered to determine student growth towards learning targets based on established content expectations.

Professional Development/Learning - Opportunities provided to teachers and other staff members to enhance their professional ability and instructional capacity.

Professional Development Plan – An outline of the goals and activities intended to enhance the capacity of the staff so as to improve both individually and collectively. The plan should be consistent with the educational needs/goals of the school.

QAR (Quality Assurance Review) – The portion of the accreditation process that involves an intensive organizational review by a panel of experts. These experts evaluate an organization's operations and practices against a set of fixed measures and make recommendations for improvement.

Required Action – Action statements provided by the Quality Assurance Review (QAR) Team that identify areas of needed action designed to enhance school and/or district effectiveness and improve student learning. Every QAR report will contain at least one required action which must be addressed by the school/district and documented in the Accreditation Progress Report.

Rubric- A clearly stated set of criteria used for evaluation.
School Improvement Plan - A tool for creating and managing change. This written plan identifies student performance goals and supporting data, assessments, evidence-based strategies/interventions, professional development, resources, timeline, and persons responsible for implementing the actions identified with the plan.

School Improvement Team - A group of school level staff and stakeholders from the community who are involved in school planning to meet the educational needs of students. The responsibility of this team is to develop, implement, and monitor the school’s improvement plan.

Self-Assessment (SA) - A process by which an educational institution reviews its data, procedures and results to determine its progress toward goals. Through this process, areas of strength and opportunity are identified.

Standard – An objective point of reference against which measurement can occur.

Stakeholder - An individual or group that has a vested interest in the life, goals and outcomes achieved by a given institution.

Strategy/intervention - An action that is specific, planned, evidence based, and focused on student results to accomplish a goal and objective.

Subgroup – A distinct subset within a larger group. For purposes of ESEA, a subgroup is defined as a subcategory of students defined by such factors as ethnicity or economic status.

Trend – A pattern of change that can result in a professional prediction of future results.

Vision/Mission/Belief Statement - A brief statement that defines and communicates the desired future for the school and generates commitment among the school community to realize that future. It expresses “what” the school community desires as the direction and purpose for the school. The vision and mission statements may be the same statement.