

Accreditation report lauds Flagler school district

By [Annie Martin](#)

EDUCATION WRITER

BUNNELL — An external review praises the Flagler County school district's effective leadership and use of financial resources but urges leaders to draft a long-term plan past 2014 and examine students' use of technology.

School Board members will review a generally rosy report from AdvancED, a nonprofit accreditation agency, during a regular meeting at 4 p.m. Tuesday at the Government Services Building.

District leaders learned they'd be re-accredited by AdvancED, which accredits more than 30,000 schools and districts worldwide, during a public meeting in March. Districts and individual schools seek accreditation partly to affirm that they're meeting academic standards. Many American universities and organizations that distribute grant money also expect applicants to be from accredited schools.

As part of the accreditation process, school officials are required to develop a long-term districtwide plan beyond 2014, when Superintendent Janet Valentine is expected to retire.

An AdvancED review team visited six schools and formally observed 33 classrooms. The team also interviewed 241 people, including: 88 teachers and professional support staff; 44 administrators; four board members; 62 students; and 43 parents, community members and business people.

Evaluators praised the effective leadership at all levels of the system. The board, administrators and staff "foster and support a culture of innovation."

"The prevailing attitude of the district leaders was that 'we'll try anything possible to effectively reach all of our students,' " according to the report.

Educators are "constantly reflecting on where we've been and where we're going," Assistant Superintendent Jacob Oliva said. Encouraging innovation, he said, fits in with the goal of preparing students for college and careers.

"The way we prepared students in the '80s does not work today," Oliva said.

Evaluators also complimented district officials for directing "financial resources to the school and classroom level in an efficient and effective manner."

"There was much evidence that the priority for the district was to maintain high quality instruction despite a recent history of annual budget reductions," according to the report.

That's a point of pride, said Diane Dyer, the district's director of high school and virtual instruction. School Board members have met three times over two weeks to discuss how they'll

bridge a \$1.8 million gap in the budget if Flagler voters don't approve a proposed tax that's expected to generate about \$3.2 million for the schools.

"They were so impressed that when so many districts have dropped things -- the arts, technology has gone by the wayside, innovation may have gone by the wayside -- we were able to maintain that," said Dyer.

The report commends the district for providing students with technology, saying access is "important for student motivation for learning as well as for addressing the 21st century skills demanded of current graduates of the district."

But the evaluators also noted that during classroom visits, "student use of technology for learning was observed to be relatively low," compared to other activities.

"The district purposefully supports technology use for instruction; therefore, it is encouraged to examine student use of technology for learning as it moves forward," according to the report.

These comments, Dyer cautioned, were based on "a snapshot" — short visits to a small number of classrooms during one week.

"It might just have been the teacher wasn't using technology on that particular day or at that moment," Dyer said.

Brunswick chairman sees smoother sailing on the horizon

By [Aaron London](#)

BUSINESS WRITER

FLAGLER BEACH— As chairman and CEO of Brunswick Corp., Dustan McCoy has to take a global view of business — literally.

With a sluggish economy and a global market for the company's products — which range from bowling center to fitness equipment as well as marine engines and boats — Brunswick faces challenges on several fronts.

Lake Forest, Ill.-based Brunswick has a strong presence in Flagler and Volusia counties with its Sea Ray Boats plant in Flagler Beach as well as the Boston Whaler and Brunswick Commercial and Government Products boat manufacturing plants in Edgewater.

McCoy was recently in Flagler Beach to bestow the Chairman's Safety Award to workers at the company's Sea Ray Boats plant. He spoke with The News-Journal about the challenges and opportunities facing both the company and U.S. manufacturers in general.

How challenging have the past few years been for the company?

The way we think about it, we don't sell anything anybody needs. We wanted to make sure we did everything we could to come out of the downturn better than we went in. We've got to find organic growth and we set to work in 2011 to focus on existing products, existing markets, new products and new markets.

In 2011, we earned (a net profit of) \$1.09 a share and we felt by the end of 2014 we would be at between \$2.20 and \$2.50 a share. Today, our guidance for Wall Street is between \$2.30 and \$2.50 per share so we're a year ahead of schedule.

How has the company managed to stay profitable despite shaky consumer confidence?

We have really great employees and we now have our debt loads where we want them. We're exceeding our goals and we've received no help from the economy. We're very excited about the opportunities for the company.

Where does the Flagler County facility fit in the company's plans for the future?

This is a remarkable facility. I come here so much to give them safety awards I tell them I see them more than I see my children. History tells us a safe plant is a plant that has exceptional quality and can do great things.

We just finished up adding about 130 people here (at the Sea Ray Boats plant in Flagler Beach) and we'll be adding another 100 people for the manufacturing operation here. We are relying on this facility more and more to carry to load to compete globally.

What is your overall perspective on the economy?

From where we sit, the economy is definitely improving, but slowly. We're prepared to live that way but we don't believe we're in full recovery yet.

The housing recovery is a bit bumpy and with GDP around 2 percent, that's not an indication of high growth.