

4) The School District of Pickens County was recently relieved of a certain level of scrutiny from the AdvanceEd accrediting agency as a result of board behavior and conduct. How will you work with other board members to ensure disagreements and debates are resolved in a professional manner, to avoid similar reprisals in the future?

Shannon Haskett: When dealing with people you will always have different opinions. In my personal experience, I have always valued other viewpoints. I feel that once I truly listen to other people's convictions then I have earned the right for them to truly listen to my convictions. The school board should have the purpose of focusing on outstanding education for our children. With this unified approach, disagreements and debates should always be resolved in a professional manner.

Alex Saitta: Background: In September 2013 AdvancED did its 5 year review. It recommended renewing re-accreditation and gave us a list of things we had to address from education issues, to creating a capital maintenance plan, to board issues.

We have education, financial, special ed audits and when they come back, they always have a list of required items. We always address them and we did here, and our accreditation was renewed for 5 years until June 2019.

Here is the response from Superintendent Mick Zais when he was written about the issue.

AdvancEd provides accreditation of districts and schools that is separate from the accreditation process of the South Carolina Department of Education. Though many schools have both accreditations, they are only required by state law to be accredited through the department of education. The graduating seniors in Pickens County will still be granted a state-issued diploma, even if it loses the AdvancEd accreditation.

The report of the AdvancEd team does not suggest that the school district is about to lose its accreditation. It lists areas of improvement and asks that plans for that to be implemented. In fact, AdvancEd has recommended renewing the Pickens County School District's accreditation.

OK, on to your question or the complaint AdvancED listed under their Required Actions that prompted about board member debates and disagreements:

Our attorney and consultant discussed this with AdvancED. It was highly questionable for a quasi-government organization to punish or reprimand elected

officials for debating the issues publicly or disagreeing with the administration. (A first amendment issue.) Our consultant and attorney wrote this in our response to AdvancED. AdvancED accepted this and dropped the complaint you are referring to in your question.