Report of the External Review for Griffith Public Schools

602 N Raymond St
Griffith, IN, 46319-2041
US

Dr. Peter Morikis

Date: April 6, 2014 - April 9, 2014
# Table of Contents

Introduction to the External Review ................................................................. 1

Part I: Findings .................................................................................................... 2
  Accreditation Standards and Indicators ............................................................ 2
  Learning Environment ....................................................................................... 22
  Student Performance ........................................................................................ 23
  Stakeholder Feedback ....................................................................................... 24
  Individual Institution Results .......................................................................... 25

Part II: Conclusion .............................................................................................. 26
  Summary of the External Review .................................................................... 26
  Required Action .............................................................................................. 30

Part III: Addenda ................................................................................................ 31
  The External Review Team ............................................................................. 31
  Next Steps ...................................................................................................... 32
  Celebrating Accreditation ............................................................................. 33
  About AdvancED ............................................................................................ 33
  References ...................................................................................................... 34
Introduction to the External Review

Accreditation is a voluntary method of quality assurance developed more than 100 years ago by American universities and secondary schools and designed primarily to distinguish schools adhering to a set of educational standards. Today the accreditation process is used at all levels of education and is recognized for its ability to effectively drive student performance and continuous improvement in education.

Institutions seeking to gain or retain accreditation must meet AdvancED standards specified for their institution, demonstrate high levels of student performance or improvement of student performance if applicable, and provide evidence of stakeholder satisfaction with the operation of the institution. The accreditation standards focus on conditions and processes within a system that impact student performance and organizational effectiveness. The power of AdvancED Performance Accreditation lies in the connections and linkages between and among the standards, student performance, and stakeholder feedback.

Institutions participate in an External Review by a team of highly qualified evaluators who examine the institution’s adherence and commitment to the accreditation criteria. The External Review is the hallmark of AdvancED Performance Accreditation as it energizes and equips the leadership and stakeholders of an institution to achieve higher levels of performance and address those areas that may be hindering efforts to reach desired performance levels. External Review is a rigorous process that includes examination of evidence and relevant data, interviews with stakeholders, and observations of instruction, learning, and operations.

The AdvancED External Review Team used the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators and related criteria to guide its evaluation, looking not only for adherence to standards but also for how the institution functioned as a whole and embodied the practices and characteristics of quality.

Using the evidence at their disposal, the AdvancED External Review Team arrived at a set of findings contained in this report. The report is presented in three sections: Findings, Conclusion, and Addenda.
Part I: Findings

The Findings section presents the External Review Team’s evaluation of the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators. It includes Powerful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement identified by the External Review Team, as well as observations about Student Performance, the Learning Environment, and Stakeholder Feedback.

Accreditation Standards and Indicators

Standards help to delineate what matters. They provide a common language through which an education community can engage in conversations about educational improvement, system effectiveness, and achievement. They serve as a foundation for planning and implementing improvement strategies and activities and for measuring success. AdvancED’s Standards for Quality were developed by a committee comprised of effective educators and leaders from the fields of practice, research, and policy who applied professional wisdom, deep knowledge of effective practice, and the best available research to craft a set of robust standards that ensure excellence and continuous improvement. Before implementation, the standards were reviewed by internationally recognized experts in testing and measurement, teacher quality, and education research.

This section contains an evaluation of each of AdvancED’s Accreditation Standards and Indicators, identification of Powerful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement related to each of the standards (if appropriate), and a description of the evidence examined by the External Review Team.

The AdvancED Standards and Indicators are the first of three primary areas of evaluation for AdvancED’s Performance Accreditation model. Using indicator-specific performance levels, the External Review Team evaluates the degree to which the institution meets each indicator on a scale of 1 to 4. The scores assigned to the indicators are averaged to arrive at a single score. This score, along with scores from evaluations of student performance and stakeholder feedback, will be used to determine the accreditation status of the institution.

| Average Indicator Score for this Institution | 2.4 |
Standard 1: The system maintains and communicates at all levels of the organization a purpose and direction for continuous improvement that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.

Purpose and direction are critical to successful institutions. A study conducted in 2010 by the London-based Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) reported that "in addition to improving performance, the research indicates that having a sense of shared purpose also improves employee engagement" and that "lack of understanding around purpose can lead to demotivation and emotional detachment, which in turn lead to a disengaged and dissatisfied workforce."

AdvancED has found through its evaluation of best practices in 30,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution commits to a shared purpose and direction and establishes expectations for student learning that are aligned with the institutions' vision and supported by internal and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and overall institution effectiveness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1.1 | • Interviews  
• Governing body policies, procedures, and practices  
• District purpose statements - past and present  
• Survey results  
• Examples of communications to stakeholders about the district's purpose (i.e. website, newsletters, annual report, student handbook)  
• Minutes from meetings related to development of the district's purpose and direction  
• Accreditation Report | 3.0 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Survey results, Agendas and/or minutes that reference a commitment to the components of the schools’ purpose statements, Examples of school purpose statements if different from the district purpose statement, Accreditation Report, Interviews, Communications that portray the system purpose</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Communication plan and artifacts that show two-way communication to staff and stakeholders about educational programs and equitable learning experiences, Observations, Interviews, Examples of schools’ continuous improvement plans, Accreditation Report, Statements or documents about ethical and professional practices, Statements of shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Interviews, Accreditation Report, Examples of schools continuous improvement plans, Survey results, Agenda, minutes from continuous improvement planning meetings, Communication plan and artifacts that show two-way communication to staff and stakeholders, The district data profile</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Standard 2: The system operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and system effectiveness.

Governance and leadership are key factors in raising institutional quality. Leaders, both local administrators and governing boards/authorities, are responsible for ensuring all learners achieve while also managing many other facets of an institution. Institutions that function effectively do so without tension between the governing board/authority, administrators, and educators and have established relationships of mutual respect and a shared vision (Feuerstein & Opfer, 1998). In a meta-analysis of educational institution leadership research, Leithwood and Sun (2012) found that leaders (school and governing boards/authority) can significantly "influence school conditions through their achievement of a shared vision and agreed-on goals for the organization, their high expectations and support of organizational members, and their practices that strengthen school culture and foster collaboration within the organization." With the increasing demands of accountability placed on institutional leaders, leaders who empower others need considerable autonomy and involve their communities to attain continuous improvement goals. Leaders who engage in such practices experience a greater level of success (Fink & Brayman, 2006).

Similarly, governing boards/authorities that focus on policy-making are more likely to allow institutional leaders the autonomy to make decisions that impact teachers and students and are less responsive to politicization than boards/authorities that respond to vocal citizens (Greene, 1992).

AdvancED's experience gained through evaluation of best practices has indicated that a successful institution has leaders who are advocates for the institution's vision and improvement efforts. The leaders provide direction and allocate resources to implement curricular and co-curricular programs that enable students to achieve expectations for their learning. Leaders encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for school improvement among stakeholders. The institution's policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2.1 | The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools. | - Interviews  
- Student handbooks  
- Staff handbooks  
- Accreditation Report  
- District operations manuals  
- School handbooks | 3.0 |
| 2.2 | The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively. | - Proof of legal counsel  
- Assurances, certifications  
- Accreditation Report  
- Interviews  
- Governing authority policies on roles and responsibilities, conflict of interest  
- Governing code of ethics | 3.0 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2.3       | The governing body ensures that the leadership at all levels has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively. | • Examples of school improvement plans  
• Interviews  
• Accreditation Report  
• Stakeholder input and feedback  
• Agendas and minutes of meetings | 3.0 |
| 2.4       | Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction. | • Examples of collaboration and shared leadership  
• Examples of decisions aligned with the school's purpose statement  
• Interviews  
• Examples of improvement efforts and innovations in the educational programs  
• Examples of decisions aligned with the district's purpose and direction  
• Accreditation Report | 3.0 |
| 2.5       | Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction. | • Accreditation Report  
• Minutes from meetings with stakeholders  
• Examples of stakeholder input or feedback resulting in district action  
• Interviews  
• Survey responses  
• Communication plan | 3.0 |
| 2.6       | Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice in all areas of the system and improved student success. | • Interviews  
• Accreditation Report  
• Governing body policy on supervision and evaluation | 3.0 |
Powerful Practices

1. The district has fostered a strong sense of family and community by developing a variety of partnerships to enhance learning opportunities for students.

   Community agencies and business partnerships significantly enhance district efforts to meet the needs of a diverse student population. Partnerships have offered opportunities for resources and hands on learning for students. These partnerships with organizations, such as the YMCA programs, Head Start, Early Child Learning Partners, Parents to Teachers, Young Rembrandt’s After-School Program, and a variety of youth sports clubs and local business supporters, provide valuable insight to the school regarding the needs within the community. The relationships developed also provide opportunities for students to be actively involved in their hometown community, which is a win-win scenario for both the school and the community.

Opportunities for Improvement

1. Formalize a plan for the members of the governing body to engage in meaningful professional development regarding the roles and responsibilities of the governing body and its individual members.

   Though the governing body protects, supports and respects the autonomy of school leadership to manage the day-to-day operations of the system and its schools, interviews with stakeholders indicated that there is a need for the governing body to develop a formal plan for their own professional development. Implementing a professional development plan for the governing body will serve as a model for the creation of a systemic professional development plan for staff members.
Standard 3: The system’s curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning across all grades and courses.

A high-quality and effective educational system has services, practices, and curriculum that ensure teacher effectiveness. Research has shown that an effective teacher is a key factor for learners to achieve to their highest potential and be prepared for a successful future. The positive influence an effective educator has on learning is a combination of "student motivation, parental involvement" and the "quality of leadership" (Ding & Sherman, 2006). Research also suggests that quality educators must have a variety of quantifiable and intangible characteristics that include strong communication skills, knowledge of content, and knowledge of how to teach the content. The institution's curriculum and instructional program should develop learners' skills that lead them to think about the world in complex ways (Conley, 2007) and prepare them to have knowledge that extends beyond the academic areas. In order to achieve these goals, teachers must have pedagogical skills as well as content knowledge (Baumert, J., Kunter, M., Blum, W., Brunner, M., Voxx, T., Jordan, A., Klusmann, U., Krauss, S., Nuebrand, M., & Tsai, Y., 2010). The acquisition and refinement of teachers' pedagogical skills occur most effectively through collaboration and professional development. These are a "necessary approach to improving teacher quality" (Colbert, J., Brown, R., Choi, S., & Thomas, S., 2008). According to Marks, Louis, and Printy (2002), staff members who engage in "active organizational learning also have higher achieving students in contrast to those that do not." Likewise, a study conducted by Horng, Klasik, and Loeb (2010), concluded that leadership in effective institutions "supports teachers by creating collaborative work environments." Institutional leaders have a responsibility to provide experiences, resources, and time for educators to engage in meaningful professional learning that promotes student learning and educator quality.

AdvancED has found that a successful institution implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning. The curriculum provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Teachers use proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process. Teachers provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations. Teachers give students feedback to improve their performance.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>The system's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at the next level.</td>
<td>Learning expectations for different courses and programs, Interviews, Course, program, or school schedules, Student work across courses or programs, Course or program descriptions, Lesson plans, Observations, Graduate follow-up surveys, Posted learning objectives, Accreditation Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout the system are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice.</td>
<td>Accreditation Report, Common assessments, Standards-based report cards, Observations, Interviews, Program descriptions, Products – scope and sequence, curriculum maps, Lesson plans aligned to the curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.</td>
<td>Examples of teacher use of technology as an instructional resource, Examples of student use of technology as a learning tool, Student work demonstrating the application of knowledge, Interviews, Accreditation Report, Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.</td>
<td>Curriculum maps, Accreditation Report, Administrative classroom observation protocols and logs, Interviews, Observations, 8-step process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator</td>
<td>Source of Evidence</td>
<td>Performance Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Observations, Agendas and minutes of collaborative learning committees, Calendar/schedule of learning community meetings, Interviews, Evidence of informal conversations that reflect collaboration about student learning, Accreditation Report</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Observations, Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance, Examples of assessments that prompted modification in instruction, Interviews, Accreditation Report, Samples of exemplars used to guide and inform student learning</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Accreditation Report, Observations, Interviews, Personnel manuals with information related to new hires including mentoring, coaching, and induction practices</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator</td>
<td>Source of Evidence</td>
<td>Performance Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3.8       | - Performance-based report cards  
           - Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance  
           - Observations  
           - Survey results  
           - List of varied activities and communications modes with families, e.g., info portal, online, newsletters, parent centers, academic nights, open house, early release days  
           - Accreditation Report  
           - Calendar outlining when and how families are provided information on child’s progress  
           - Interviews  
           - One Call  
           - Power School  
           - Text messages  
           - Emails | 2.0 |
| 3.9       | - Accreditation Report  
           - Survey results  
           - Interviews  
           - Observations | 2.0 |
| 3.10      | - Interviews  
           - Sample communications to stakeholders about grading and reporting  
           - Observations  
           - Accreditation Report  
           - Sample report cards for each program or grade level and for all courses and programs  
           - Policies, processes, and procedures on grading and reporting | 2.0 |
| 3.11      | - Survey results  
           - Accreditation Report  
           - Observations  
           - Interviews | 2.0 |
### Opportunities for Improvement

1. Formulate and implement a rigorous professional development plan that includes instruction on best practices to engage students at the high school level to ensure greater achievement.

   Through teacher and student interviews and classroom observations, the evidence indicated that teachers emphasize getting active student engagement at the elementary and middle school levels. However, it was also clear that high school instruction relies more on lecture and note taking. Districts that use best practices for student engagement at the high school level experience an increase in student achievement.

2. Embed instructional best practices into the teacher supervision and evaluation process.

   Through teacher interviews, observations, the self-assessment report and a review of artifacts, it is evident that teacher evaluations are not tied to best practices for student engagement. Instructional improvement and student achievement are products of best practices being specifically included in the evaluation process. Districts that use an evaluation process targeted to best practices see an increase in student success.

3. Develop and implement a district-wide student advocacy plan.

   As noted in interviews with various stakeholder groups and during classroom observations, some students in the district are well known by their teachers. Parents confirmed this when they stated that teachers go above and beyond when their students need additional support. Staff and parent surveys as well as the district’s self-assessment indicated a need for a student advocacy program. A district-wide student advocacy initiative will assure that each student has one adult advocate in the school who supports each student’s educational experience.
Standard 4: The system has resources and provides services in all schools that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.

Institutions, regardless of their size, need access to sufficient resources and systems of support to be able to engage in sustained and meaningful efforts that result in a continuous improvement cycle. Indeed, a study conducted by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (Pani, D., Rudo, Z., Schneider, C., & Smith-Hansen, L., 2003) "demonstrated a strong relationship between resources and student success... both the level of resources and their explicit allocation seem to affect educational outcomes."

AdvancED has found through its own evaluation of best practices in the 30,000 institutions in the AdvancED network that a successful institution has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, meets special needs, and complies with applicable regulations. The institution employs and allocates staff members who are well qualified for their assignments. The institution provides a safe learning environment for students and staff. The institution provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff members to improve their effectiveness. The institution ensures compliance with applicable governmental regulations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard 4</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The system has resources and provides services in all schools that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students. | 4.1 The system engages in a systematic process to recruit, employ, and retain a sufficient number of qualified professional and support staff to fulfill their roles and responsibilities and support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, and educational programs. | • Accreditation Report  
• Observations  
• Interviews  
• Documentation of highly qualified staff  
• Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement and retention of professional and support staff for the district and schools | 2.0 |
|                                                                             | 4.2 Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the system, individual schools, educational programs, and system operations. | • Observations  
• Examples of school schedules  
• Accreditation Report  
• Interviews | 3.0 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4.3       | 3.0               | - Interviews  
- Observations  
- Accreditation Report  
- Example systems for school maintenance requests  
- Survey results  
- Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements  
- School safety committee responsibilities, meeting schedules, and minutes |
| 4.4       | 2.0               | - Interviews  
- Accreditation Report  
- Observations |
| 4.5       | 3.0               | - Observations  
- Interviews  
- Accreditation Report  
- Data on media and information resources available to students and staff  
- Schedule of staff availability to assist students and school personnel related to finding and retrieving information |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4.6 | - Brief description of technology or web-based platforms that support the education delivery model  
- Policies relative to technology use at the district-level and school-level  
- District technology plan and budget to improve technology services and infrastructure for the district-level and school-level  
- Accreditation Report  
- Interviews  
- Brief description of learning management systems or data management systems that support the effective use of student assessment results, school effectiveness, and district effectiveness  
- Examples of school-level technology plans and budgets to improve technology services and infrastructure to students and staff  
- Observations | 3.0 |
| 4.7 | - Observations  
- Interviews  
- Student assessment system for identifying student needs  
- Agreements with school community agencies for student-family support  
- Accreditation Report  
- Social classes and services, e.g., bullying, character education  
- List of support services available to students  
- Community partnerships | 2.0 |
4.8 The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.

- List of services available related to counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning
- Accreditation Report
- Description of IEP process
- Observations
- Interviews
- Description of referral process
- Follow-up studies

3.0

**Powerful Practices**

1. The district has invested in its facilities to provide students and staff a very secure and well-maintained environment for learning.

   Based upon the review of financial information, policies and procedures, observations of facilities and interviews with leadership, staff, students and parents, it is apparent that the district takes security very seriously. Great effort has been made to ensure that all facilities provide a safe, well-maintained environment to support learning. Safety procedures are consistently practiced throughout the system. The learning environment is a major factor affecting the ability of students to learn and teachers to teach. They must feel safe and comfortable to focus optimally on the work at hand.
Opportunities for Improvement

1. Create and implement a system to optimally and equitably determine the levels of staffing for the schools to provide the support necessary to achieve the district’s goals within the resources that are available.

Through interviews with stakeholders and classroom observations the team was unable to establish the existence of a formal process for determining the staffing assigned to buildings. It appears that, while a building’s staff allocation is certainly tied to the number of students, staffing is not tied to directly to a systematic process that establishes needs. The development of a staffing process to serve as a basis for district and building human resource allocation will enhance more effective planning and administrative team building.

2. Incorporate the current goal-setting process into a broader initiative to develop a formal strategic plan to guide current and long-term district functions.

Through stakeholder interviews and a review of the district self-assessment report and artifacts the team learned of the process of establishing district goals. The team observed that this had risen to the level of a full strategic plan. Development of a strategic plan, with its regular review and modification, would provide an opportunity for greater stakeholder involvement into the operations of the district. Such a plan should also be a means of communicating to the public how the schools are determining their success, thus gaining greater community support.

3. Develop and implement a process to assess the support systems that are available to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of students.

As our society places more stresses on youth, it is important that schools determine their ability to support students and families in meeting those challenges. While the district is fortunate to have talented and committed counselors, demands continue to grow. The district is fortunate to have full-time, agency provided mental health services on site. As good practice, it is advisable that the types and qualities of services be periodically assessed. As the district has dedicated itself to the development and implementation of continuous improvement of instruction, it is important that it focus as well on maintaining the individual and organizational conditions that support learning.
**Standard 5: The system implements a comprehensive assessment system that generates a range of data about student learning and system effectiveness and uses the results to guide continuous improvement.**

Systems with strong improvement processes move beyond anxiety about the current reality and focus on priorities and initiatives for the future. Using results, i.e., data and other information, to guide continuous improvement is key to an institution's success. A study conducted by Datnow, Park, and Wohlstetter (2007) from the Center on Educational Governance at the University of Southern California indicated that data can shed light on existing areas of strength and weakness and also guide improvement strategies in a systematic and strategic manner (Dembosky, J., Pane, J., Barney, H., & Christina, R., 2005). The study also identified six key strategies that performance-driven systems use: (1) building a foundation for data-driven decision making, (2) establishing a culture of data use and continuous improvement, (3) investing in an information management system, (4) selecting the right data, (5) building institutional capacity for data-driven decision making, and (6) analyzing and acting on data to improve performance. Other research studies, though largely without comparison groups, suggested that data-driven decision making has the potential to increase student performance (Alwin, 2002; Doyle, 2003; Lafee, 2002; McIntire, 2002).

Through ongoing evaluation of educational institutions, AdvancED has found that a successful institution uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly defined performance measures. The system is used to assess student performance on expectations for student learning, evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, and determine strategies to improve student performance. The institution implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns the functions of the school with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained, and the institution demonstrates progress in improving student performance and institution effectiveness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5.1       | The system establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system. | • Brief description of technology or web-based platforms that support the education delivery model  
• Interviews  
• Brief description of student assessment system including range of data produced from standardized and local or school assessments on student learning and school performance  
• Observations  
• Accreditation Report  
• Evidence that assessments are reliable and bias free | 2.0 |

© 2014 AdvancED

www.advanc-ed.org
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source of Evidence</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Professional and support staff continuously collect, analyze and apply learning from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data about student learning, instruction, program evaluation, and organizational conditions that support learning. &lt;br&gt;• Accreditation Report &lt;br&gt;• District quality control procedures that monitor schools in effectively using data to improve instruction and student learning &lt;br&gt;• Written protocols and procedures for data collection and analysis &lt;br&gt;• Interviews</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data. &lt;br&gt;• Accreditation Report &lt;br&gt;• Interviews</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>The school system engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level. &lt;br&gt;• Interviews &lt;br&gt;• Accreditation Report &lt;br&gt;• Agendas, minutes of meetings related to analysis of data &lt;br&gt;• Description of process for analyzing data to determine verifiable improvement in student learning &lt;br&gt;• Evidence of student growth</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>System and school leaders monitor and communicate comprehensive information about student learning, school performance, and the achievement of system and school improvement goals to stakeholders. &lt;br&gt;• Minutes of meetings regarding achievement of student learning goals &lt;br&gt;• Accreditation Report &lt;br&gt;• Communication plan regarding student learning, systems that support learning, and achievement of school improvement goals to stakeholders &lt;br&gt;• Sample communications to stakeholders regarding student learning, conditions that support learning, and achievement of school improvement goals &lt;br&gt;• Interviews</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opportunities for Improvement

1. Design and implement a comprehensive assessment system that includes locally-developed formative and end-of-course assessments for courses other than Algebra I, English 10 and Biology.

The district has created and implemented a system-wide assessment plan, with an implementation calendar for the 2013–14 school year. Assessments include large-scale standardized tests (i.e., ISTEP, AP tests, Acuity, mCLASS, LAS Links, and Indiana End-of-Course assessments for Algebra I, English 10 and Biology). The calendar includes only those formal large-scale assessments. Teachers and school improvement leaders shared in interviews ways in which they develop assessments as part of the 8-Step instructional planning process. However, neither the assessment plan nor the calendar includes references to locally-developed assessments, data that might inform the 8-Step instructional planning process. A school that uses a balanced assessment system including locally developed formative, as well as commercially available, assessments will have a more complete set of student achievement information to use for guiding instruction and continuous improvement activities.

2. Design and implement formal program evaluation processes to determine the effectiveness of the continuous improvement initiatives; use information from this evaluation to extend the current school improvement plan.

Program evaluation is very informal in the Griffith Public Schools. Some processes are in place that can be organized into a formal system of program evaluation (i.e., school-level leadership team discussions, data team meetings and Response to Intervention team meetings); however, the lack of formal program evaluation processes is noticeable in several important program areas, such as professional development programs and student support programs (i.e., physical, social and emotional needs); counseling programs (i.e., assessment, referral, educational and career planning needs). While all of these programs are provided to support student success, program evaluation appears to be very informal if it exists at all. Elementary school teachers have begun to use the 8-Step instructional planning process to analyze student performance data from various assessments in determining which students have learned what has been taught and in grouping students for remediation and enrichment. On the other hand, the team heard little from school leaders and reviewed limited information about ways in which data from various sources are used to evaluate program effectiveness and continuous improvement plans. As evaluation processes are further developed and implemented, necessary current programs can be made more effective, programs found to be ineffective can be jettisoned, and essential new programs can be added.
Learning Environment

Every learner should have access to an effective learning environment in which she/he has multiple opportunities to be successful. The Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (ELEOT) measures the extent to which learners are in an environment that is equitable, supportive, and well-managed. An environment where high expectations are the norm and active learning takes place. It measures whether learners' progress is monitored and feedback is provided and the extent to which technology is leveraged for learning.

Observations of classrooms or other learning venues are conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes per observation. External Review Team members conduct multiple observations during the review process and provide ratings on 30 items based on a four-point scale. The following provides the aggregate average score across multiple observations for each of the seven learning environments included in ELEOT.
Student Performance

Student Performance on assessments is the second of three primary areas of evaluation for AdvancED's Performance Accreditation model. Institutions are asked to collect and analyze student performance data, then submit the data and the analyses to the External Review Team for review. The External Review Team evaluates the quality of the assessments used by the institution, the degree to which the institution properly administered the assessments, analyzed and acted on the results, and the overall performance of students using a set of rubrics. Results of that evaluation are reported below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluative Criteria</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Quality</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test Administration</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Learning</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity of Learning</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholder Feedback is the third of three primary areas of evaluation in AdvancED’s Performance Accreditation model. The AdvancED surveys are directly correlated to the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators; they provide not only direct information about stakeholder satisfaction but also become a source of data for triangulation by the External Review Team as it evaluates indicators.

Institutions are asked to collect and analyze stakeholder feedback data, then submit the data and the analyses to the External Review Team for review. The External Review Team evaluates the quality of the administration of the surveys by institution and the degree to which the institution analyzed and acted on the results. Results of that evaluation are reported below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Feedback Evaluation</th>
<th>Evaluative Criteria</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questionnaire Administration</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Individual Institution Results

AdvancED requires internal and external stakeholders from each individual institution within the system to evaluate their institution on the AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools, student performance, and stakeholder feedback. The following table provides the results of those self-analyses. Higher scores indicate higher perceived performance on each of the measures. The range of possible scores for each of the institutions within the system are 1 (low performing) to 4 (high performing).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Indicator Averages</th>
<th>Questionnaire Administration</th>
<th>Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis</th>
<th>Assessment Quality</th>
<th>Test Administration</th>
<th>Quality of Learning</th>
<th>Equity of Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eldon Ready Elementary School</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsie Wadsworth Elementary School</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffith High School</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffith Middle School</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter J. Beiriger Elementary School</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part II: Conclusion

Summary of the External Review

In off-site and on-site review sessions, the AdvancED External Review Team examined artifacts and evidence provided by the institution. During the on-site portion of the review, the team reviewed additional artifacts, collected and analyzed data from interviews, and conducted observations.

The External Review team arrived in Griffith, Indiana, on Sunday, April 6, and spent four days in the Griffith Public Schools. The team was comprised of one member from Minnesota, one from Michigan, and three from Indiana. Members had previous experience with the AdvancED review process and brought a broad set of educational experiences from which to provide an educated perspective at the district, its schools and operations levels. Team members held their first meeting on Sunday afternoon where members discussed their early perceptions of the district's adherence with AdvancED Standards based upon their review of information that had been provided prior to the visit. This primarily consisted of district and school executive summaries, self-assessment, artifacts, survey data and websites.

The visiting team is grateful for the fine preparation by the school district for the visit. Most evidence and artifacts were made available on the district website to the team. They were complete and well organized. All requests for information or access to individuals were fulfilled promptly and graciously.

Monday was spent at the district office with presentations and interviews with many stakeholders. The day began with an overview of the system and description of the approach that was taken in preparing the self-assessments. Each of the standards subgroups of the district leadership team presented information on their process in coming to their rating conclusions. Following the presentation the leadership team and visiting team met in three groups to dwell deeper into the standards. The groups were organized around:

Teaching and Assessing for Learning, Using Results for Continuous Improvement, and Student Performance Diagnostic

Purpose and Direction, Governance and Leadership, and Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic

Resources and Support Systems

The standards team meetings were followed by an interview with the superintendent. He provided a good overview of the district and the issues with which it is dealing.

The team interviewed stakeholder representatives in small groups. The interviews included four of the five school board members, twelve administrators, sixty-nine teachers, nineteen support staff, eighty-seven students, eight parents and eight community representatives.

Tuesday was spent visiting the five district schools. At each building, representatives of the visiting team met with the principal and the school improvement team. Across the district, a total of fifty classroom observations took
Observers used the AdvancED Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (ELEOT) to capture evidence of student engagement and activity. Each observation was for a minimum of twenty minutes.

**Using the evidence collected, the team engaged in dialogue and deliberations concerning the degree to which the institution met the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators.**

From the presentations, interviews, observations and a review of artifacts, the team learned that there is a strong commitment across the district to meet the needs of all learners.

At the elementary schools the team met with the respective school leadership teams. At each of them it was clear that there is a climate of continuous improvement that is pervasive. The team was particularly impressed with the excellent general classroom management. This contributes to much of the exemplary teaching that was observed.

Through the leadership team discussions and visits at the secondary level, the team learned of a breadth of course offerings intended to meet the needs and interests of all students. It was apparent there is a spirit of school and community pride with their schools.

The system has considerable data available from which to assist with decision-making on program and individual student bases; however, there is a lack of time for the collaborative learning communities to digest and analyze it. The team was impressed with the concept of data walls that are being used in the elementary schools. In addition, there appears to be a need for additional focused professional development activity.

Throughout the system a spirit of autonomy was evident. Leadership at all levels spoke to the fact that they have autonomy to manage their operations without undue influence.

Of particular note is the excellent condition of the facilities at all levels. It is apparent that the district takes great pride in providing a secure and well-maintained learning environment for teaching and learning.

The district is to be commended on the partnerships it has formed and are maintained to leverage the organization's resources and services. The work with the city to make the closing of an elementary school a positive opportunity is an excellent example of community collaboration. An outcome has been additional programming through the YMCA for the students and families of the district. Other examples of partnering greater service are the school resources officer and the full-time community mental health worker placed in the schools.

**During the on-site review, members of the External Review Team evaluated the learning environment by observing classrooms and general operations of the institution. Using data from these observations, the team evaluated the quality of instruction and learning that took place classified around seven constructs or environments: equity, high expectations, support, engagement, progress monitoring and feedback, management, and use of technology.**

Average ratings for the first of the six areas ranged from 2.66 to 3.10 on a 4-point scale. This indicates substantial consistency of positive observations in the environments of Equitable Learning Environment (2.69), High Expectations Environment (2.91), Supportive Learning Environment (3.09), Active Learning Environment (2.85), Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment (2.89), and Well-Managed Learning Environment (3.18).

The Digital Learning Environment was observed to be at a rating of 1.59. Although classrooms are relatively well...
equipped with current technology, students were generally engaged in traditional learning modes, such as reading books, interacting in small groups or with their classes, or listening to a teacher. The Team focused on how students were functioning, rather than on teaching practices. Where technology was being used, it was often by teachers, rather than the learners.

The External Review team appreciates the hospitality and professional attitude toward continuous improvement observed throughout the system and among all stakeholder groups. Special thanks are extended to the district AdvancED leadership team and the school improvement teams that spent the past several months of work in preparation for the visit. This commitment is reflected in the high quality accreditation documentations.

In the past, accreditation reviews resulted in an accreditation recommendation on status. Labels such as advised, warned, probation, or all clear were used to describe the status of a school relative to the criteria. Beginning with school year, 2013-14, AdvancED is introducing a new framework to describe the result of an accreditation review. Consistent with the modern focus of accreditation on continuous improvement with an emphasis on student success, AdvancED introduces an innovative and state-of-the-art framework for diagnosing and revealing institutional performance called the Index of Education Quality (IEQ). The IEQ is comprised of three domains of performance: 1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; 2) the leadership capacity to govern; and 3) use of resources to support and optimize learning. Therefore, your institution will no longer receive an accreditation status. Instead, your institution will be accredited with an IEQ score. In the case where an institution is failing to meet established criteria, the accreditation will be under review thereby requiring frequent monitoring.

The three domains of performance are derived from the AdvancED Standards and Indicators; the Analysis of Student Performance; and the Engagement and Involvement of Stakeholders. Within each domain institutions will be able to connect to the individual performance levels that are applied in support of the AdvancED Standards and evaluative criteria. Within the performance levels are detailed descriptors that can be a valuable source of guidance for continuous improvement. Upon review of the findings in this report, institutional leaders should work with their staff to review and understand the evidence and rationale for each Required Action as well as the corresponding pathway to improvement described in the performance levels of the selected Indicator.

The IEQ provides a new framework that recognizes and supports the journey of continuous improvement. Your institution's IEQ is the starting point for continuous improvement. Your actions for improvement that have a positive impact will be reflected in your IEQ score.

IEQ Institutional Score: 249

Teaching and Learning Impact: 219
(Standards 3 and 5; Student Performance Criteria)

Leadership Capacity: 292
(Standards 1 and 2; Stakeholder Engagement Criteria)

Resource Utilization: 263
(Standard 4)
The External Review team recommends that the Griffith Public Schools be accredited by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission for a five-year term of accreditation.
Required Action

1. Design and implement a district-wide mentoring and coaching program for new teachers.

   Related Indicator or Assurance: 3.7

   Description:
   Data from staff surveys, as well as the district’s self-assessment document, indicated a need for a mentoring and coaching program. Attrition rates of new staff were cited in interviews with stakeholder groups as a reason for needing this program. Establishing a district-wide mentoring and coaching program will assure that the district’s values and beliefs about teaching and learning are supported by new staff. A support program for teachers, especially in their first years, is a critical means of fostering quality instruction.

2. Provide on-going training that helps teachers develop a broad range of 21st Century data-driven teaching strategies that actively engage students in learning.

   Related Indicator or Assurance: 3.11

   Description:
   As noted in the district’s self-assessment, there is no formal professional development plan in place. Interviews and observations confirmed that no formal process exists for connecting the evaluation process with the development of a district professional development plan. By implementing a formal professional development plan connected with school improvement goals, the teacher evaluation process, as well as the interpretation and the use of student assessment data, will promote greater student achievement.

3. Develop and implement a comprehensive district-wide improvement process that reflects input from representatives of all stakeholder groups, and communicate progress toward district goals at least annually.

   Related Indicator or Assurance: 5.5

   Description:
   District and school leaders provided evidence that student performance data from a variety of sources are used to determine how well students are learning what is being taught. On the other hand, while the district has defined six district-level improvement goals, action plans to implement these goals are not yet complete. Neither are there specific plans for evaluation of the impact of the plans, once completed and implemented. Further, the team saw few examples of ways in which progress with continuous improvement goals is communicated to various stakeholder groups. Districts and schools that consistently evaluate the impact of educational programs and continuous improvement strategies as well as the status of implementation are more likely to experience success over the long-term.
Part III: Addenda

The External Review Team

Lead Evaluator:
John Sedey

Associate Lead Evaluator:
Ms. Mary L Mickelson

Reviewer:
Dr. Jennifer Horvath

Team Member:
Mr. Bruce D Jennings

Mr. Corey Alan Robb

Dr. Sue Stephens
Next Steps

The institution should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all stakeholders.
2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the Powerful Practices section to maximize their impact on the institution.
3. Develop action plans to address the Required Actions made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward addressing the Required Actions.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the institution’s efforts to improve student performance and system effectiveness.
5. Following the External Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the Required Actions. Institutions are required to respond to all Required Actions. The Required Actions should be completed before the Accreditation Progress Report is submitted. The report will be reviewed at the appropriate state, national, and/or international levels to monitor and ensure that the system has implemented the necessary actions to complete the Required Actions. The accreditation status will be reviewed and acted upon based on the completion of the Required Actions and the resulting improvement.
6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.
Celebrating Accreditation

Following the External Review, the team submits the final report to AdvancED for review and for action by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission that confers accreditation upon the institution. Upon receiving its accreditation, the institution should share its achievement with internal and external communities.

About AdvancED

In 2006, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), both founded in 1895, and the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) came together to form AdvancED: one strong, unified organization dedicated to education quality. In 2011, the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC) that was founded in 1917 joined NCA CASI and SACS CASI as part of AdvancED. AdvancED is the world's largest education community, representing 30,000 public and private schools and systems across the United States and in 75 countries worldwide and educating 16 million students.

Today, NCA CASI, NWAC, and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED. Through AdvancED, these divisions share research-based accreditation standards that cross state, regional, national, and international boundaries. Accompanying these standards is a unified accreditation process designed to help educational institutions continuously improve.
References

Alwin, L. (2002). The will and the way of data use. School Administrator, 59(11), 11.


Doyle, D. P. (2003). Data-driven decision making: Is it the mantra of the month or does it have staying power? T.H.E. Journal, 30(10), 19-21.


