



External Review

Paths to Independence

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Introduction to the External Review Process

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 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 also includes Powerful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement identified by the External Review Team, observations of the Learning Environment, as well as Required Actions.

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. 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, conclusions concerning Powerful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement related to each of the standards, and a description of the evidence examined by the External Review Team. Indicators are evaluated and rated individually by the External Review Team using a four-level performance rubric. The Standard Performance Level is the average of indicator scores for the standard.

Standard 1: Purpose and Direction

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 own 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 aligned with the institutions' vision that is supported by internal and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and overall institution effectiveness.

Standard	Standard Performance Level
The school maintains and communicates a purpose and direction that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	3.0

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
1.1	The school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Minutes from meetings related to development of the school's purpose•Survey results•Accreditation Report•Examples of communications to stakeholders about the school's purpose (i.e. website, newsletters, annual report, student handbook)•Interviews•Documentation or description of the process for creating the school's purpose including the role of stakeholders•Purpose statements - past and present	3
1.2	The school's leadership and staff commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning and supports challenging, equitable educational programs and learning experiences for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Interviews•Accreditation Report•Observations•The school's statement of purpose	4
1.3	The school's leadership implements a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Interviews•Observations•Survey results•Accreditation Report	2

Standard 2: Governance and Leadership

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 school leadership research, Leithwood & 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 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 school communities to attain school 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 school 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 has found through its own evaluation of best practices in 30,000 institutions around the world 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.

Standard			Standard Performance Level
The school operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and school effectiveness.			3.17
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Governing body policies, procedures, and practices •Staff handbooks •Accreditation Report •School handbooks 	3
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Interviews •Accreditation Report •Communication plan to inform all staff on code of ethics, responsibilities, conflict of interest •Proof of legal counsel •Findings of internal and external reviews of compliance with laws, regulations, and policies •Governing body policies on roles and responsibilities, conflict of interest 	3
2.3	The governing body ensures that the school leadership has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •School improvement plan developed by the school •Observations •Accreditation Report •Stakeholder input and feedback •Interviews 	4

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2.4	Leadership and staff foster a culture consistent with the school's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Examples of collaboration and shared leadership•Interviews•Examples of decisions aligned with the school's statement of purpose•Accreditation Report•Examples of decisions in support of the school's continuous improvement plan	3
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the school's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Observations•Copies of surveys or screen shots from online surveys•Accreditation Report•Involvement of stakeholders in a school improvement plan•Interviews•Communication plan	4
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice and student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Observations•Interviews•Accreditation Report	2

Powerful Practices

Indicator

1. The school has an effective and competent leadership team composed of the school's board and administration.

2.3

The board is highly supportive and encouraging of the school's director. Effective two-way communication highlights the relationship. The board and director provide competent, effective leadership to the school and actively seek input from all stakeholders.

Standard 3: Teaching and Assessing for Learning

A high-quality and effective 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, which include strong communication skills, knowledge of content, and knowledge of how to teach the content. The school'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 et al, 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 et al, 2008). According to Marks, Louis, & Printy (2002), school staff that engage in "active organizational learning also have higher achieving students in contrast to those that do not." Likewise, a study conducted by Horng, Klasik, & Loeb (2010), concluded that leadership in effective schools, "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 through its own evaluation of best practices in 30,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning that 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.

Standard			Standard Performance Level
The school's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning.			3.25
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.1	The school'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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Accreditation Report •Lesson plans •Interviews •Observations •Representative samples of student work across courses •Descriptions of instructional techniques 	4
3.2	Curriculum, instruction, and assessment are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Interviews •Curriculum guides •Observations •Accreditation Report •Products – scope and sequence, curriculum maps •Lesson plans aligned to the curriculum 	4

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3.3	Teachers engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Authentic assessments •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 •Observations •Accreditation Report •Interviews •Interdisciplinary projects 	4
3.4	School leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Curriculum maps •Observations •Interviews •Accreditation Report 	2
3.5	Teachers participate in collaborative learning communities to improve instruction and student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Examples of cross curricular projects, interdisciplinary instruction, and classroom action research project •Common language, protocols and reporting tools •Observations •Interviews •Accreditation Report 	3
3.6	Teachers implement the school's instructional process in support of student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Interviews •Observations •Examples of assessments that prompted modification in instruction •Accreditation Report •Samples of exemplars used to guide and inform student learning 	3
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the school's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Observations •Accreditation Report •Interviews 	3

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3.8	The school engages families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keeps them informed of their children's learning progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Accreditation Report•Observations•Survey results•Volunteer program with variety of options for participation•List of varied activities and communications modes with families, e.g., info portal, online, newsletters, parent centers, academic nights, open house, early release days•Calendar outlining when and how families are provided information on child's progress•Interviews	3
3.9	The school has a formal structure whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the school who supports that student's educational experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Survey results•Interviews•Observations•Accreditation Report	4
3.10	Grading and reporting are based on clearly defined criteria that represent the attainment of content knowledge and skills and are consistent across grade levels and courses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Accreditation Report•Observations•Interviews•Sample report cards for each grade level and for all courses	3
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Results of evaluation of professional learning program.•Observations•Survey results•Interviews•Accreditation Report	3
3.12	The school provides and coordinates learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Accreditation Report•Observations•Data used to identify unique learning needs of students•Interviews	3

1. Highly effective instructional techniques are employed to meet individual student needs. 3.3

The school serves children and youth diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. The school utilizes methods from applied behavior analysis and TEACHH to effectively teach the students. The team observed instruction that was well-planned, well-prepared, and effectively delivered. Students were engaged and on-task during the observation - no small feat considering the types of students served.

Standard 4: Resources and Support Systems

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 (Pan, 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 30,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, to meet special needs, and to comply with applicable regulations. The institution employs and allocates staffs 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 to improve their effectiveness. The institution ensures compliance with applicable governmental regulations.

Standard			Standard Performance Level
The school has resources and provides services that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.			3.0
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.1	Qualified professional and support staff are sufficient in number to fulfill their roles and responsibilities necessary to support the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Survey results •Accreditation Report •Documentation of highly qualified staff 	3
4.2	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Accreditation Report •Survey results •Interviews •Observations •highly qualified teacher 	3

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4.3	The school maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Observations •Interviews •Survey results •Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements •Accreditation Report •Documentation of emergency procedures such as fire drills, evacuation and other emergency procedures. •DHS licensed and inspected 	4
4.4	Students and school personnel use a range of media and information resources to support the school's educational programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Accreditation Report •Interviews •Observations •Data on media and information resources available to students and staff 	3
4.5	The technology infrastructure supports the school's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Interviews •Technology plan and budget to improve technology services and infrastructure •Assessments to inform development of technology plan •Policies relative to technology use •Observations 	2
4.6	The school provides support services to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Interviews •Accreditation Report •Survey results •Observations •List of support services available to students 	3
4.7	The school provides services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Accreditation Report •Interviews •Description of IEP process 	3

Opportunities for Improvement

Indicator

1. Develop more technological resources to enhance student learning.

4.5

The school utilizes computer technology to enhance instruction. Currently, the school relies on a few desktop computers that have internet access. Computer programs are also used. However, the school identified this as an area of need and is seeking ways to increase and enhance the use of technology.

Standard 5: Using Results for Continuous Improvement

Systems with strong improvement processes are moving beyond anxiety about the current reality and focusing on priorities and initiatives for the future. Using results, that is, data and other information, to guide continuous improvement is key to an institution's success. A study conducted by Datnow, Park, & 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 (Dembo et al., 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 school 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).

AdvancED has found through its own evaluation of best practices in 30,000 institutions around the world 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.

Standard		Standard Performance Level
The school implements a comprehensive assessment system that generates a range of data about student learning and school effectiveness and uses the results to guide continuous improvement.		2.6
Indicator	Source of Evidence	Performance Level

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5.1	The school establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Interviews •Accreditation Report •Survey results •Observations •Brief description of student assessment system including range of data produced from standardized and local assessments on student learning and school performance 	3
5.2	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Accreditation Report •Interviews •List of data sources related to student learning, instruction, program effectiveness, and conditions that support learning •Observations 	2
5.3	Professional and support staff are trained in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Documentation of attendance and training related to data use •Observations •Interviews •Accreditation Report 	3
5.4	The school engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Student surveys •Examples of use of results to evaluate continuous improvement action plans •Evidence of student growth •Accreditation Report 	3
5.5	Leadership monitors and communicates comprehensive information about student learning, conditions that support student learning, and the achievement of school improvement goals to stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Minutes of board meetings regarding achievement of student learning goals •Accreditation Report •Survey results 	2

Opportunities for Improvement

Indicator

1. Develop a system to collect, analyze, and report data on student learning from a variety of sources in a variety of settings.

5.2

The school is still quite young - only a year old. In planning for growth, the school has identified this area as a need and is taking steps to develop a system of data collection and management.

Early Learning Standard 4: Resources and Support Systems

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 (Pan, 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 30,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, to meet special needs, and to comply with applicable regulations. The institution employs and allocates staffs 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 to improve their effectiveness. The institution ensures compliance with applicable governmental regulations.

Standard		Standard Performance Level	
The Early Learning program has resources and provides services that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all children.		3.41	
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.1	Qualified professional and support staff are sufficient in number to fulfill their roles and responsibilities necessary to support the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Interviews •Observations •Accreditation Report •Staff License/certification/qualifications •Assessments of staff needs •Professional and support staff/child ratios 	4
4.2	The school employs qualified Administrators/Directors for each administrative position to support the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement, and retention of professional and support staff •Accreditation Report •Observations •Policies that require relevant and related trainings •Staff License/certification/qualifications •Interviews 	4

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4.3	The school employs qualified teachers for each professional teaching position to support the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement, and retention of professional and support staff•Policies that require relevant and related trainings•Observations•Staff License/certification/qualifications•Accreditation Report	4
4.4	The school employs qualified assistant teachers for each position to support the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Interviews•Observations•Accreditation Report	2
4.5	The school maintains a class-size and ratio of young children to teachers that support the care and developmentally appropriate learning, growth, and development of young children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement, and retention of professional and support staff•Interviews•Policies that require relevant and related trainings•Observations•Accreditation Report•Staff to student ratio records	4
4.6	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the early learning school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Equipment purchasing and maintenance•School schedule•Alignment of budget with school purpose and direction•School calendar•Observations•Accreditation Report	4

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4.7	The school maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all young children and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Written health and safety policies •Facilities and equipment maintenance records and schedules •Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements •Building inspections record •Accreditation Report •CPR/1st Aid Certification/ health safety trainings •Updated health records •Documentation of emergency procedures such as fire drills and evacuation routes 	4
4.8	The school regularly assesses and maintains all indoor spaces to be accessible to all young children and adults; ventilated, lighted, and temperature-controlled; and the spaces that primarily serve each age-group of young children have direct access to bathroom/washing facilities, sinks, and drinking water.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Written health and safety policies •Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements •Accreditation Report •Building and grounds inspections record •Documentation of emergency procedures such as fire drills and evacuation routes •System for maintenance requests 	4
4.9	Each classroom/learning space has sufficient usable floor space and size to support the creativity and developmentally appropriate learning, growth, and development of young children; is highly functional for program delivery; and encourages positive staff-to-child relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Written health and safety policies •Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements •Accreditation Report •Building and grounds inspections record •Documentation of emergency procedures such as fire drills and evacuation routes •System for maintenance requests 	4
4.10	Each classroom/learning space has furniture, equipment, and resources that are safe, clean, well maintained, adaptive, accessible, and developmentally appropriate for the age-group of young children they directly serve; are sufficient in number; and are organized in ways to support appropriate and effective implementation of the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Accreditation Report •Facilities and equipment maintenance records and schedules •System for maintenance requests 	3

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4.11	Indoor and outdoor equipment are safe, available to all young children, are developmentally appropriate for the age-group, have appropriate surfaces to support a variety of types of learning and play, and have impact material under all climbing equipment and swings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Written health and safety policies•Facilities and equipment maintenance records and schedules•Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements•Building and grounds inspections record•Documentation of emergency procedures such as fire drills and evacuation routes•Accreditation Report	4
4.12	Each classroom/learning space has multiple learning/interest centers that are organized for independent use by young children, that support the learning activities of the instructional program and the creativity of young children, and that are well equipped with materials supportive of the purpose of each learning/interest center.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Accreditation Report•Stakeholder results•Observations•Interviews•Curriculum standards, guides, expectations	4
4.13	Each classroom/learning space provides all children with safe and comfortable/cozy areas to relax, rest, or sleep that are continuously supervised by adults at all times.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Observations•Interviews•Accreditation Report•Curriculum standards, guides, expectations	3
4.14	Children and school personnel use a range of interactive media and information resources that support the educational programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Technology plan•Observations•Interviews•Accreditation Report	2
4.15	The technology infrastructure supports the school's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Accreditation Report•Survey results•Interviews•Observations	2

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4.16	Each classroom/learning space has displays that are used effectively as a learning tool, are developmentally appropriate for the age-group, attractively presented, appropriate in content, portray the current learning activities, and showcase children's work and creativity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Interviews•Accreditation Report•Stakeholder results•Observations•Curriculum standards, guides, expectations	4
4.17	The school provides support services to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of young children that are integral to the educational program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Agreements with school community agencies for student-family support•Accreditation Report•Observations•Interviews	2
4.18	Each child receives individual personal care by staff members who consistently promote the child's general well-being, nutrition, health, and safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Observations•Stakeholder results•Parent/Staff communications procedures and expectations•Accreditation Report•Interviews	4
4.19	Arrival and departure routines focus on the care and well-being of each child and encourage a daily exchange of family and school communications regarding the care, well-being, and educational progress of the child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Student records indicating personal needs•Interviews•Stakeholder results•Parent/Staff communications procedures and expectations•Accreditation Report•Observations	4
4.20	The school provides services that support the counseling, assessment, and educational referral needs of all students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Accreditation Report•Observations•Interviews	2

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4.21	All children, parents, and staff experience an environment of reciprocal respect, trust, and open communication in a fair and just way, respecting the needs and characteristics of each individual, and promoting a sense of community, belonging, ownership, and pride.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Handbooks, procedures•Observations•Complaints policies and procedures•Interviews•Statement of principles•Accreditation Report•Code of conduct•Written policies on positive guidance strategies	4
4.22	All indoor and outdoor spaces are free from hazards and dangerous circumstances for young children and adults, and adults actively remove and resolve hazardous conditions as they may occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Observations•Facility and equipment specifications•Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements•Accident records and reports•Interviews•Safety handbooks, guidelines, procedures, expectations•Health inspection records	3

Powerful Practices

Indicator

1. The school has created a cooperative relationship with a local daycare that provides for effective early learning opportunities for its students to interact with neurotypical peers.

4.9

Children with developmental delays benefit from learning experiences with neurotypical peers. Interacting with peers provides an effective instructional environment for the teaching of social skills.

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 4 point scale with 4=very evident, 3=evident, 2=somewhat evident, and 1=not observed. The following provides the aggregate average score across multiple observations for each of the 7 learning environments included in ELEOT.

Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (ELEOT)

<i>Environments</i>	<i>Level</i>
A. Equitable Learning Environment:	4.0
B. High Expectations Environment:	4.0
C. Supportive Learning Environment:	4.0
D. Active Learning Environment:	4.0
E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment:	4.0
F. Well-Managed Learning Environment:	4.0
G. Digital Learning Environment	3.0

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 took place on Wednesday, April 24, 2013 and lasted just one day. The school was well prepared for the visit. The team found that the school's self-assessment was highly accurate. The team found the school very hospitable, open, and forthcoming. The team interviewed the school's director and teacher, three parents, four board members, and one student.

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.

The school is a special purpose school designed to serve children and youth with autism spectrum disorders. The team found that the school utilizes instructional practices that are research-based and highly effective for the students it serves. The school has identified needs in the area of technology and is working on finding resources to expand access and use of technology in enhancing instruction. The team encourages the school to develop a long-term strategic plan for improvement that addresses specifically, among other things, the improvement of access to and use of technology, a systematic procedure for staff evaluation, and policies and procedures describing the acquisition, analysis, and use of student performance data.

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.

Despite some areas in need of improvement, the school is doing an excellent job overall in meeting the specialized needs of its students. The director and board bring a high level of expertise in working with students with autism. All stakeholders exhibit a great passion for the mission of the school, and leadership does an excellent job in seeking and utilizing input from all stakeholders in most decisions. Given that the school has been in operation for only one year, the team was impressed with the quality and effectiveness of its instructional program. The team observed children who were being served very well and who were growing and learning.

The school was ably prepared and very cooperative and helpful. The team thanks the board, administration, and staff of the school for all the hard work and effort put forward in the process. The team is very happy to recommend that the school be granted full accreditation.

Required Actions

1. Develop a long-term strategic plan for the continuous improvement of the school that specifically addresses the acquisition, development, and use of technology; outlines a professional system of evaluation of certified and non-certified personnel; and the policies and procedures for the gathering and analysis of data for instructional improvement.

Primary Indicator or Assurance: 1.3

In operation for only a year, the school is very young. However, the team was impressed with the level of excellence found in the administration and leadership of the school as well as the instructional program. The school is well poised for future growth. The team encourages the school leadership to develop a long-term strategic plan that addresses all areas of the school but specifically in areas that the school was found relatively weak. While the school uses computers for instruction, the team found resources in this area to be in need of improvement. This was supported by stakeholder interviews, observation, as well as the school's own assessment.

As a very small school, mentoring and on-going evaluation of employees happens on an informal basis. However as the school grows, it will be necessary to have a well-planned system of evaluation of both certified and non-certified personnel in place. Instruction is data-driven. The team was able to see first hand how instructors gathered data and used it to guide instructional planning. Again, this was more informal than formal. A sound system of data acquisition and management is critical to ensuring student success - especially given the population served by the school. Good data will also allow the school to definitively show stakeholders and the wider community the effectiveness of its programs.

Part III: Addenda

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 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 state and national level 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, which confers accreditation and 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, along with 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 (founded 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. The Northwest Accreditation Commission joined the AdvancED network in 2011.

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