

Report of the  
External Review Team  
for  
Iowa Falls Community School  
District

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US

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# Introduction

The External Review is an integral component of AdvancED Performance Accreditation and provides the institution with a comprehensive evaluation guided by the results of diagnostic instruments, in-depth review of data and documentation, and the professional judgment of a team of qualified and highly trained evaluators. A series of diagnostic instruments examines the impact of teaching and learning on student performance, the capacity of leadership to effect continuous improvement, and the degree to which the institution optimizes its use of available resources to facilitate and support student success. The results of this evaluation are represented in the Index of Education Quality (IEQ™) and through critical observations, namely, Powerful Practices, Opportunities for Improvement, and Improvement Priorities.

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 specific to their institution type, demonstrate acceptable levels of student performance and the continuous improvement of student performance, and provide evidence of stakeholder engagement and satisfaction. The power of AdvancED Performance Accreditation lies in the connections and linkages between and among the conditions, processes, and practices within a system that impact student performance and organizational effectiveness.

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 Standards were developed by a committee comprised of talented 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 define institutional quality and guide continuous improvement. Prior to implementation, an internationally recognized panel of experts in testing and measurement, teacher quality, and education research reviewed the standards and provided feedback, guidance and endorsement.

The AdvancED External Review Team uses AdvancED Standards, associated indicators and criteria related to student performance and stakeholder engagement to guide its evaluation. The Team examines adherence to standards as well as how the institution functions as a whole and embodies the practices and characteristics expected of an accredited institution. The Standards, indicators and related criteria are evaluated using indicator-specific performance levels. The Team rates each indicator and criterion on a scale of 1 to 4. The final scores assigned to the indicators and criteria represent the average of the External Review Team members' individual ratings.

The External Review is the hallmark of AdvancED Performance Accreditation. It energizes and equips the institution's leadership and stakeholders 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 the in-depth examination of evidence and relevant data, interviews with all stakeholder groups, and extensive observations of learning, instruction, and operations.

## Use of Diagnostic Tools

A key to examining the institution is the design and use of diagnostic tools that reveal the effectiveness with which an institution creates conditions and implements processes and practices that impact student performance and success. In preparation for the External Review the institution conducted a Self Assessment that applied the standards and criteria for accreditation. The institution provided evidence to support its conclusions vis a vis organizational effectiveness in ensuring acceptable and improving levels of student performance.

- an indicator-based tool that connects the specific elements of the criteria to evidence gathered by the team;
- a student performance analytic that examines the quality of assessment instruments used by the institution, the integrity of the administration of the assessment to students, the quality of the learning results including the impact of instruction on student learning at all levels of performance, and the equity of learning that examines the results of student learning across all demographics;
- a stakeholder engagement instrument that examines the fidelity of administration and results of perception surveys seeking the perspective of students, parents, and teachers;
- a state-of-the-art, learner-centric observation instrument, the Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™) that quantifies students' engagement, attitudes and dispositions organized in 7 environments: Equitable Learning, High Expectations, Supportive Learning, Active Learning, Progress Monitoring and Feedback, Well-Managed Learning, and Digital Learning. All evaluators must be trained, reach acceptable levels of inter-rater reliability, and certified to use this research-based and validated instrument.

The External Review Team's findings and critical observations are shared in this report through the IEQ™ results as well as through the identification of Powerful Practices, Opportunities for Improvement, and Improvement Priorities.

## Index of Education Quality

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 AdvancED Standards and other evaluative criteria. Beginning in the 2013-14 school year, AdvancED introduced a new framework to describe the results of an accreditation review. Consistent with the modern focus of accreditation on continuous improvement with an emphasis on student success, AdvancED introduced an innovative and state-of-the-art framework for diagnosing and revealing institutional performance called the Index of Education Quality (IEQ™). The IEQ™ comprises three domains of performance: 1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; 2) the capacity of leadership to guide the institution toward the achievement of its

vision and strategic priorities; 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 and demonstrated improvement.

The three domains of performance are derived from the AdvancED Standards and associated indicators, the analysis of student performance, and the engagement and feedback of stakeholders. Within each domain institutions can 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 serve as a valuable source of guidance for continuous improvement. Upon review of the findings in this report and building on their Powerful Practices, institutional leaders should work with their staff to review and understand the evidence and rationale for each Opportunity for Improvement and Improvement Priority as well as the corresponding pathway to improvement described in the performance levels of the selected indicator(s).

The IEQ™ provides a new framework that recognizes and supports the journey of continuous improvement. An institution's IEQ™ is the starting point for continuous improvement. Subsequent actions for improvement and evidence that these have had a positive impact will raise the institution's IEQ™ score.

## Benchmark Data

Throughout this report, AdvancED provides benchmark data for each indicator and for each component of the evaluative criteria. These benchmark data represent the overall averages across the entire AdvancED Network for your institution type. Thus, the AdvancED Network average provides an extraordinary opportunity for institutions to understand their context on a global scale rather than simply compared to a state, region, or country.

It is important to understand that the AdvancED Network averages are provided primarily to serve as a tool for continuous improvement and not as a measure of quality in and of itself. Benchmark data, when wisely employed, have a unique capacity to help institutions identify and leverage their strengths and areas of improvement to significantly impact student learning.

## Powerful Practices

A key to continuous improvement is the institution's ability to learn from and build upon its most effective and impactful practices. Such practices serve as critical leverage points necessary to guide, support and ensure continuous improvement. A hallmark of the accreditation process is its commitment to identifying with evidence, the conditions, processes and practices that are having the most significant impact on student performance and institutional effectiveness. Throughout this report, the External Review Team has captured and defined Powerful Practices. These noteworthy practices are essential to the institution's effort to continue its journey of improvement.

## Opportunities for Improvement

Every institution can and must improve no matter what levels of performance it has achieved in its past. During the process of the review, the External Review Team identified areas of improvement where the institution is meeting the expectations for accreditation but in the professional judgment of the Team these are Opportunities for Improvement that should be considered by the institution. Using the criteria described in the corresponding rubric(s) to the Opportunity for Improvement, the institution can identify what elements of practice must be addressed to guide the improvement.

## Improvement Priorities

The expectations for accreditation are clearly defined in a series of the rubric-based AdvancED Standards, indicators and evaluative criteria focused on the impact of teaching and learning on student performance, the capacity of the institution to be guided by effective leadership, and the allocation and use of resources to support student learning. As such, the External Review Team reviewed, analyzed and deliberated over significant bodies of evidence provided by the institution and gathered by the Team during the process. In the professional judgment of the Team as well as the results of the diagnostic process, the Team defined, with rationale, Improvement Priorities. The priorities must be addressed in a timely manner by the institution to retain and improve their accreditation performance as represented by the IEQ™. Improvement Priorities serve as the basis for the follow-up and monitoring process that will begin upon conclusion of the External Review. The institution must complete and submit an Accreditation Progress Report within two years of the External Review. The report must include actions taken by the institution to address the Improvement Priorities along with the corresponding evidence and results. The IEQ™ will be recalculated by AdvancED upon review of the evidence and results associated with the Improvement Priorities.

## The Review

Iowa Falls Community School District is located in an area approximately 82 miles northeast of Des Moines, Iowa. The system review began on the evening of October 12, 2014 and concluded with the Exit Report on the afternoon of October 15, 2014. Five members served on the accreditation External Review Team from both outside Iowa and inside the state. In preparing for the visit, the Lead Evaluator was in contact with the leadership in planning the visit and to ensure the necessary artifacts would be available for the team's review prior to arrival on-site.

The Lead Evaluator was in contact with the External Review Team via e-mails. The Team was notified when documents were placed on the workspace, standards were assigned, and instructions for the first evening meeting. Team members were provided with the system's complete Accreditation Report and the school's Accreditation Reports in ample time for preparation and study for the External Review. Most of the documents provided were in electronic format and were provided to each team member. All requests for additional artifacts and information were quickly fulfilled.

The External Review Team spent the first evening reviewing the Accreditation Report, artifacts, discussing and reviewing the ratings for each standard indicator, and preparing questions for Monday's interviews. Also, on

the first evening, the review team had dinner with the superintendent and the four building principals. After dinner, the superintendent presented the Overview.

On Monday, the External Review Team was able to conduct 140 formal interviews in the system including, five administrators, 48 teachers, four board members, five support staff, 70 students and eight parents. The review team found the system stakeholders interviewed to be candid and reflective in the discussions, interviews, and inquiries.

In addition, the team conducted 53 formal classroom observations in the district's four schools, using the eleot™ observation tool as team members sought to confirm their findings about school operations. The district's four schools were divided as follows: the 3-5 elementary and the middle school were visited by two team members; the K-2 elementary and the high school were visited by three team members.

The External Review Team commends Iowa Falls Community School District for its commitment to excellence, as demonstrated in their continuing to seek AdvancED District accreditation. Everyone was very welcoming and helpful during the External Review, answering the team's many questions and clarifying what the team had read in the documents provided. The team wants to thank Superintendent Dr. John Robbins and his staff for organizing the entire review. As a result of their efforts, the district was well-prepared for the External Review. It was a pleasure for the team to conduct the review, and the team wishes to thank all schools that contributed to the preparation for the visit by conducting internal reviews and surveys.

Stakeholders were interviewed by members of the External Review Team to gain their perspectives on topics relevant to the institution's effectiveness and student performance. The feedback gained through the stakeholder interviews was considered with other evidences and data to support the findings of the External Review. The following chart depicts the numbers of persons interviewed representative of various stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder Interviewed	Number
Superintendents	1
Board Members	4
Administrators	4
Instructional Staff	48
Support Staff	5
Students	70
Parents/Community/Business Leaders	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>

# Results

## Teaching and Learning Impact

The impact of teaching and learning on student achievement is the primary expectation of every institution. The relationship between teacher and learner must be productive and effective for student success. The impact of teaching and learning includes an analysis of student performance results, instructional quality, learner and family engagement, support services for student learning, curriculum quality and efficacy, and college and career readiness data. These are all key indicators of an institution's impact on teaching and learning.

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 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.

Institutions 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.

### Standard 3 - Teaching and Assessing for Learning

The system's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning across all grades and courses.

Indicator	Description	External Review Score	AdvancED Network Average
3.1	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.	3.00	2.69
3.2	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.	3.00	2.55
3.3	Teachers throughout the district engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	3.00	2.54
3.4	System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	3.00	2.70
3.5	The system operates as a collaborative learning organization through structures that support improved instruction and student learning at all levels.	3.00	2.57
3.6	Teachers implement the system's instructional process in support of student learning.	2.50	2.48
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the system's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	2.50	2.67

Indicator	Description	External Review Score	AdvancED Network Average
3.8	The system and all of its schools engage families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keep them informed of their children's learning progress.	3.00	2.97
3.9	The system designs and evaluates structures in all schools whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the student's school who supports that student's educational experience.	2.50	2.46
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.	3.00	2.57
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	3.50	2.60
3.12	The system and its schools provide and coordinate learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	3.00	2.63

## Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement

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.

Indicator	Description	External Review Score	AdvancED Network Average
5.1	The system establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	3.00	2.67
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 that support learning.	2.50	2.48
5.3	Throughout the system professional and support staff are trained in the interpretation and use of data.	2.00	2.14
5.4	The school system engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level.	3.00	2.45
5.5	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.	3.00	2.85

## Student Performance Diagnostic

The quality of assessments used to measure student learning, assurance that assessments are administered with procedural fidelity and appropriate accommodations, assessment results that reflect the quality of learning, and closing gaps in achievement among subpopulations of students are all important indicators for

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evaluating overall student performance.

Evaluative Criteria	External Review Score	AdvancED Network Average
Assessment Quality	3.00	3.32
Test Administration	4.00	3.62
Equity of Learning	3.00	2.52
Quality of Learning	3.00	3.06

## Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™)

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. Every member of the External Review Team is required to be trained and pass a certification exam that establishes inter-rater reliability. Team members conduct multiple observations during the review process and provide ratings on 30 items based on a four-point scale (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 seven learning environments included in eleot™ as well as benchmark results across the AdvancED Network.

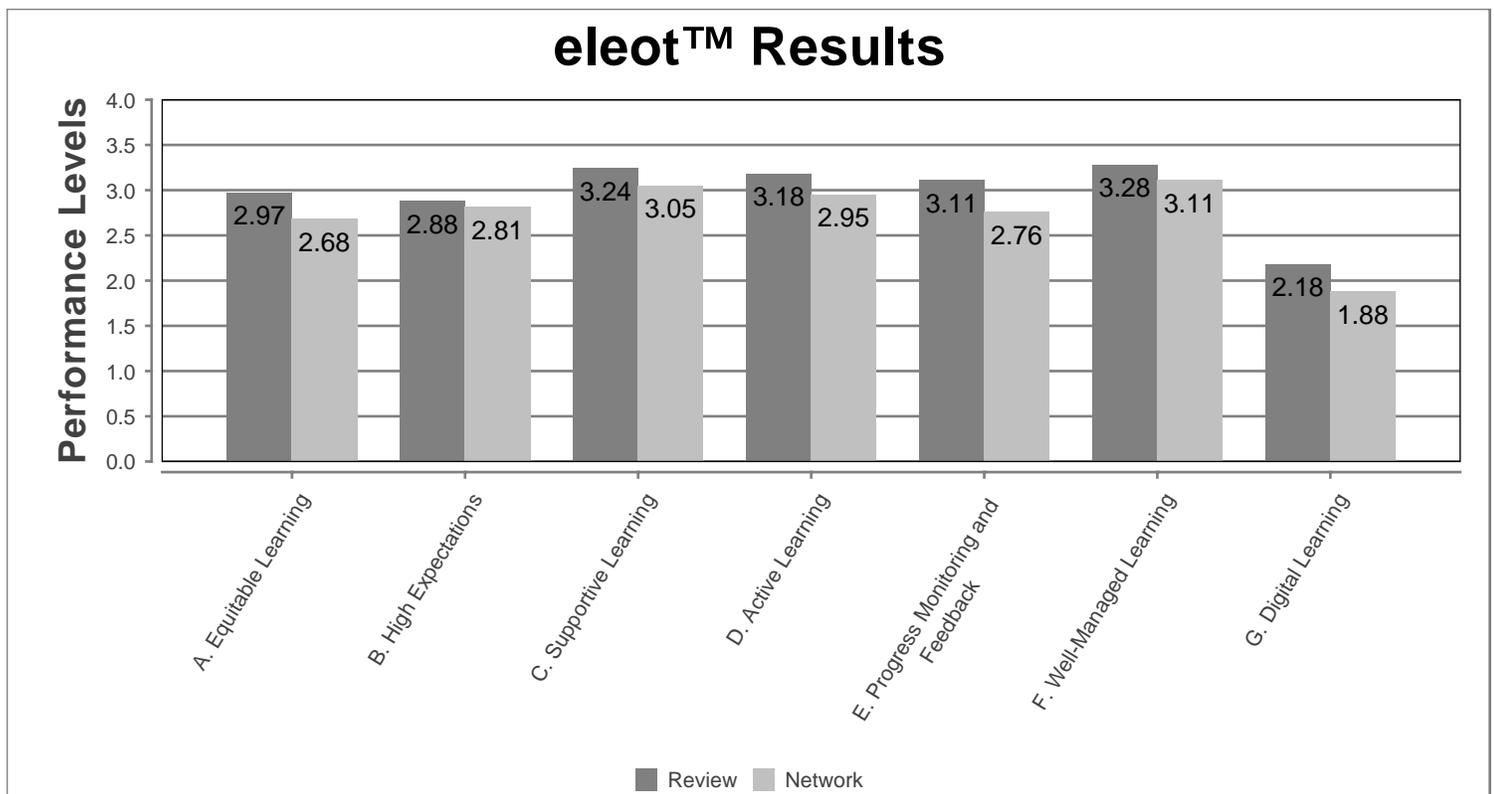
In conducting 53 classroom visits using the Effective Learning Environment Observation Tool™ (eleot™), team members were able to gain a deeper insight into the system's instructional climate. These classroom visits were at all levels K-12, core classrooms as well as elective courses, and were conducted per the AdvancED observation protocol. Each of the seven learning environments was observed and results tallied to produce a snapshot of the learning environment. Beginning with the highest averages and concluding with the lowest averages, the results of these multiple observations were as follows: Well Managed Learning Environment (3.28), Supportive Learning Environment (3.24), Active Learning Environment (3.18), Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment (3.11), Equitable Learning Environment (2.97), High Expectations Environment (2.88) and Digital Learning Environment (2.18). The eleot averages by the External Review Team in each of the seven domains were higher than the AdvancED Network (AEN) scores.

Well-Managed Learning Environment: Students and staff interacted respectfully with each other and students were well aware of classroom routines and behavioral expectations. Student-centered activities did not always include collaboration opportunities for the students. Supportive Learning Environment: Students seemed comfortable taking risks in learning and teachers provided some feedback. However, alternative/additional instruction and feedback were not readily observed. Active Learning Environment: Student discussions centered on clarifying teacher expectations and answering teacher questions. Students were engaged in activities, but there were minimal connections to real-life experiences. Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment: Students demonstrated understanding of the content. Equitable Learning Environment: Students were provided with learning opportunities and access, but it was not based on the students' backgrounds, cultures and differences. High Expectations Environment: Students were engaged with activities to meet teacher expectations. However, very few exemplars were observed being presented to students. Digital Learning Environment: A few classrooms observed revealed students using technology to gather information or for word processing.

The compilation of the scores supports the findings of the External Review Team. One finding confirms that

student behavior is respectful within a well-managed learning environment. The team verified that the practice of differentiated instruction was not embedded in the observed learning environment. The External Review Team did not observe students being asked to engage in higher-order thinking on a consistent basis. Team members were specifically looking for examples, as this was a particular targeted intervention for the district. The school culture and learning environments are positive, caring, supportive, and respectful, assisting and encouraging students to excel academically, socially, and behaviorally.

In classroom observations conducted by the External Review Team, the team members did indeed find safe and supportive learning environments for the students. Students seem to feel safe on the school grounds, and they also feel safe to contribute and offer opinions in the classroom. The interactions between students and staff and students and their peers were respectful, classroom procedures were generally followed, and disruptions to learning were most often minimal.



## Findings

### Improvement Priority

Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to systematically train the professional and support staff in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data to inform instruction and increase student achievement.

(Indicators 5.3)

### Evidence and Rationale

While there is evidence that some teachers use data for classroom instruction and student learning, the External Review Team, through the district's accreditation report, stakeholder interviews, and artifact reviews, found no evidence revealing all professional and support staff are trained to evaluate, interpret, and use data to drive instruction. A systematic plan needs to include an infrastructure to provide time for all professional and support staff to be trained and to work together in building collaborative opportunities to evaluate, interpret, and use data. The plan should also include regular follow-up meetings to ensure consistency and to validate that school improvement goals are being met. This guarantees an on-going monitoring system on data use for analysis and provides stakeholder feedback that creates a community of best practices. A rigorous and tailored staff development program, individualized so that all staff members can be regularly and systematically trained and assessed in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data will assist in making curricular and instructional decisions to improve teacher efficacy and student outcomes.

### **Improvement Priority**

Develop and implement a district-wide plan for all staff members in collecting and analyzing data sources related to student learning, instruction, program evaluation and organizational conditions, including the fidelity of implementation, documenting and analyzing results.

(Indicators 5.2)

#### *Evidence and Rationale*

Artifacts, self-assessment results and multiple interviews revealed a need for a more systemic approach for data analysis and program evaluation. Based on artifact review and interviews, the team saw evidence of the schools and district beginning the process to apply and use data to individualize instruction and learning from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data. While evidence exists that some grade levels and schools were doing an effective job of consistently gathering, analyzing, and using the data to monitor student performance, the team did not see a district-wide plan to ensure consistent implementation of this data analysis and usage across grade levels and schools. The External Review Team found little evidence of a systemic quality assurance review process with regard to program implementation and effectiveness. A number of professional initiatives have been put in place in recent years. These initiatives often lack clear, measurable targets. Programs are not evaluated for their impact on student performance or the contribution to meeting district goals. Quality assurance program reviews ensure that all grade levels and schools are following the district plan with fidelity and consistency. Accountability and consistency also ensure that the strategies that are implemented have a positive impact on student learning and program effectiveness.

### **Opportunity for Improvement**

Develop and implement a formalized, written mentoring, coaching, and induction process that is aligned to district goals and instructional values and beliefs.

(Indicators 3.7)

#### *Evidence and Rationale*

During discussions with teachers, the External Review Team learned there is inconsistency with mentoring and

coaching, and induction activities for new teachers. An artifact review found the district has not developed a formal and systematic process of inducting and supporting teachers new to the district. Some teachers have taken the initiative to offer assistance to new staff and some new to the district have sought support from teachers within the schools. A formal structured plan that is systematically implemented within the district will ensure all teachers are familiar with curriculum, instructional practices, assessments, and are encouraged to become actively engaged in the district and school improvement process.

# Leadership Capacity

The capacity of leadership to ensure an institution's progress towards its stated objectives is an essential element of organizational effectiveness. An institution's leadership capacity includes the fidelity and commitment to its institutional purpose and direction, the effectiveness of governance and leadership to enable the institution to realize its stated objectives, the ability to engage and involve stakeholders in meaningful and productive ways, and the capacity to enact strategies to improve results of student 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 more than 32,000 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.

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.

## Standard 1 - Purpose and Direction

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.

Indicator	Description	External Review Score	AdvancED Network Average
1.1	The system engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a system-wide purpose for student success.	3.00	2.67
1.2	The system ensures that each school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	3.00	2.69
1.3	The school leadership and staff at all levels of the system 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.	3.50	2.87
1.4	Leadership at all levels of the system implement a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	3.00	2.64

## Standard 2 - Governance and Leadership

The system operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and system effectiveness.

Indicator	Description	External Review Score	AdvancED Network Average
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the system and its schools.	3.50	2.96
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	3.50	2.99
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.	4.00	3.20
2.4	Leadership and staff at all levels of the system foster a culture consistent with the system's purpose and direction.	3.50	3.00
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the system's purpose and direction.	2.00	2.69
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice in all areas of the system and improved student success.	3.00	2.78

## Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic

Stakeholder Feedback is the third of three primary areas of evaluation in AdvancED's Performance Accreditation model. The AdvancED surveys (student, parent, and teacher) are directly correlated to the AdvancED 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, survey results, and the degree to which the institution analyzed and acted on the results.

Evaluative Criteria	External Review Score	AdvancED Network Average
Questionnaire Administration	3.00	3.43
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	3.00	3.12

## Findings

### Improvement Priority

Develop and implement a district-wide plan for all staff members in collecting and analyzing data sources related to student learning, instruction, program evaluation and organizational conditions, including the fidelity of implementation, documenting and analyzing results.

(Indicators 5.2)

### Evidence and Rationale

Artifacts, self-assessment results and multiple interviews revealed a need for a more systemic approach for data analysis and program evaluation. Based on artifact review and interviews, the team saw evidence of the schools and district beginning the process to apply and use data to individualize instruction and learning from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data. While evidence exists that some grade levels and schools were doing an effective job of consistently gathering, analyzing, and using the data to monitor student performance, the team did not see a district-wide plan to ensure consistent implementation of this data analysis and usage across grade levels and schools. The External Review Team found little evidence of a systemic quality assurance review process with regard to program implementation and effectiveness. A number of professional initiatives have been put in place in recent years. These initiatives often lack clear, measurable targets. Programs are not evaluated for their impact on student performance or the contribution to meeting district goals. Quality assurance program reviews ensure that all grade levels and schools are following the district plan with fidelity and consistency. Accountability and consistency also ensure that the strategies that are implemented have a positive impact on student learning and program effectiveness.

**Opportunity for Improvement**

Develop and implement a plan that includes and engages all stakeholders in support of the district's vision.  
(Indicators 2.5)

*Evidence and Rationale*

Based upon information included in the district's accreditation report, artifacts, and during interviews with school board members, teachers, and parents, the External Review Team found no evidence of parent or student involvement in the development of the district's vision statement. During interviews, stakeholders indicated there was a need for stakeholder involvement. Additionally, the district did not meet the required number of participants for the parent survey. Fully engaging all stakeholders will promote ownership and will increase the opportunity for more stakeholder involvement in the decision making process.

**Powerful Practice**

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.

(Indicators 2.3)

*Evidence and Rationale*

The External Review Team through observation, surveys, and interviews, validates that the school leadership has the autonomy to meet all goals and manage the district effectively. The governing body understands its roles and responsibilities and functions effectively while complying with all policies, procedures, laws, and regulations. Members of the governing body indicated they are always open to implementing best practices. This has created a system that is moving toward working together for student success. Other stakeholders corroborated that the board supports initiatives that focus on increased student performance, the upgrading of facilities, and appropriate autonomy for administrators. A highly functioning governing board can provide vision for a systematic and sustainable continuous improvement process.

## Resource Utilization

The use and distribution of resources must be aligned and supportive of the needs of an institution and the students served. Institutions must ensure that resources are aligned with the stated mission and are distributed equitably so that the needs of students are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes an examination of the allocation and use of resources, the equity of resource distribution to need, the ability of the institution to ensure appropriate levels of funding and sustainability of resources, as well as evidence of long-range capital and resource planning effectiveness.

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, 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 more than 32,000 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 and ensures compliance with applicable governmental regulations.

## Standard 4 - Resources and Support Systems

The system has resources and provides services in all schools that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.

Indicator	Description	External Review Score	AdvancED Network Average
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.	3.00	2.98
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.	3.00	2.98
4.3	The system maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	4.00	3.05
4.4	The system demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the system.	3.00	2.67

Indicator	Description	External Review Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.5	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of information resources and related personnel to support educational programs throughout the system.	3.00	2.82
4.6	The system provides a technology infrastructure and equipment to support the system's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	3.00	2.64
4.7	The system provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of support systems to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	2.00	2.65
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.	3.00	2.64

## Findings

### Powerful Practice

The system provides well-maintained, clean, and safe facilities that enhance the learning environment. (Indicators 4.3)

### Evidence and Rationale

Stakeholder interviews, survey results, and observation of the facility and grounds by the External Review Team validated the exceptionally positive characteristics of the facility. Even though the buildings were older, they and the surrounding areas have been meticulously maintained. The district has taken steps to improve security by installing video cameras. The system has a crisis plan that includes fire, shelter in place and lock downs. The team also observed effective classroom management, effective transition of students from one area of the building to another, and a positive, orderly environment for students.

# Conclusion

During the on-site review, members of the External Review Team noted general themes related to student success and organizational effectiveness that emerged during the review. Using the data from these observations, the External Review Team identified general themes of the "Leader In Me" initiative; Instructional Practices Inventory (IPI) utilization for instructional improvement; Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW) for the enhancement of high level educational activities; an ongoing commitment to technology utilization as an educational tool; committed professionals serving in the district; and a community pride that is reflected in the impeccable upkeep of facilities.

The District has major activities planned to address identified challenges. The Teacher Leader Community (TLC) grant is targeted to provide training for data interpretations and "coaches" for a district wide mentor program. Ongoing training in data interpretation, application and implementation is identified as a district priority. As these opportunities materialize, the district is encouraged to focus financing and staffing on strategic contributions to academic success for every student.

As you examine the Improvement Priorities, you are encouraged to use those priorities as a roadmap to form a foundation for growth and improvement. As a district, the ultimate goal to always strive for, is success for every student being served. In general, the External Review Team found Iowa Falls Community School District to be an organization whereby the governing board and district leadership are committed to a long-term improvement process and are willing to allocate resources accordingly. Further training in analysis and use of data to inform professional practices will provide a basis for targeted improvement. Finally, a program monitoring and evaluation plan will assist the district in determining the effectiveness of current practices and new initiatives.

## Improvement Priorities

The institution should use the findings from this review to guide the continuous improvement process. The institution must address the Improvement Priorities listed below:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to systematically train the professional and support staff in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data to inform instruction and increase student achievement.
- Develop and implement a district-wide plan for all staff members in collecting and analyzing data sources related to student learning, instruction, program evaluation and organizational conditions, including the fidelity of implementation, documenting and analyzing results.

# Accreditation Recommendation

## Index of Education Quality

The Index of Education Quality (IEQ™) provides a holistic measure of overall performance based on a comprehensive set of indicators and evaluative criteria. A formative tool for improvement, it identifies areas of success as well as areas in need of focus.

The IEQ™ comprises three domains: 1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; 2) the leadership capacity to govern; and 3) the use of resources and data to support and optimize learning.

The overall and domain scores can range from 100-400. The domain scores are derived from: the AdvancED Standards and indicators ratings; results of the Analysis of Student Performance; and data from Stakeholder Feedback Surveys (students, parents, and staff).

	External Review IEQ Score	AdvancED Network Average
Overall Score	301.22	282.79
Teaching and Learning Impact	292.86	274.14
Leadership Capacity	316.67	296.08
Resource Utilization	300.00	286.32

The IEQ™ results include information about how the institution is performing compared to expected criteria as well as to other institutions in the AdvancED Network. The institution should use the information in this report, including the corresponding performance rubrics, to identify specific areas of improvement.

Consequently, the External Review Team recommends to the AdvancED Accreditation Commission that the institution earn the distinction of accreditation for a five-year term. AdvancED will review the results of the External Review to make a final determination including the appropriate next steps for the institution in response to these findings.

# Addenda

## Individual Institution Results (Self-reported)

Institution Name	Teaching and Learning Impact	Leadership Capacity	Resource Utilization	Overall IEQ Score
Iowa Falls-Alden High School	280.95	318.18	314.29	297.44
Pineview Elementary School	333.33	345.45	314.29	333.33
Riverbend Middle School	300.00	309.09	328.57	307.69
Rock Run Elementary School	304.76	309.09	314.29	307.69

# Team Roster

Member	Brief Biography
Mr. Jerry R Morgan	Jerry completed Bachelor of Science, Master of Science and Educational Specialist degrees from Indiana State University in Terre Haute, IN. His 39 years of experience included high school classroom teacher and middle school Assistant Principal and Principal. He retired from Clay Community Schools in 2002 and presently is employed part-time as a Field Consultant and School Improvement Facilitator for AdvancED Indiana.
Dr. Brenda Kay Hillman	<p>*In third year as Administrator at Iowa Christian Academy.</p> <p>*Spent 10 years in Private school administration in South Carolina</p> <p>*from 1984 until 2000 she worked at the collegiate level as an Assistant Professor of Education and worked in the athletic department as a Head Coach.</p> <p>*BS in Physical Education/Health/Recreation in 1982 from Taylor University</p> <p>*MA in Secondary Education in 1985 from Georgia Southern University</p> <p>*EdD in Educational Leadership in 2011 from Argosy University - Sarasota</p>
Dr. Rozalyne P Wright	Dr. Rozalyne P. Wright, Education and Diversity Consultant, earned her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Spanish from Bethune-Cookman College (University) in Daytona Beach, Florida; her Master's Degree in Administration from the University of Tampa; and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University. She began her educational career in 1972 as a classroom teacher at R. B. Cox Elementary School in Dade City, Florida. Her 17 years of experience at Cox Elementary School included classroom teacher, Migrant Language Arts Resource Teacher, Assistant Principal and Principal. In 1989, she relocated to Highlands County, serving as Coordinator of Personnel and Director of Elementary and Federal Programs. In March 2001, she was employed by the Collier County School Board as Director of Diversity prior to assuming responsibilities as Executive Assistant to the Superintendent. She retired from the Collier County School District in 2008 and, subsequently, established ZORAD Consultative Services, LLC. She provides contracted services for AdvancED and supervises interns for several universities.
Ms. Brenda Colby	<p>Brenda served as special education teacher, curriculum assistant principal, school improvement consultant and middle school and high school principal during her 40 year career in education. Her experience spanned three states, including Missouri, Iowa and Georgia. Brenda completed her Bachelor of Science and Master's degrees at Northeast Missouri State University (Truman State). As a Rotary Scholar, Brenda completed the Diploma in Special Education at King Alfred's College in Winchester, England. She completed her administrator's certification at Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia.</p> <p>Brenda retired from the Ankeny Community School District in Ankeny, Iowa, June 30, 2014. During retirement, she will continue to work with AdvancEd as well as the Ministry of Education in Dubai, UAE.</p>
Dr. John DellaVedova	Doctorate in Educational Leadership Drake University, past Iowa schools' superintendent in three districts, past director of MAED program for Viterbo University's Iowa office, past adjunct for Upper Iowa University, presently adjunct and student teacher supervisor for Buena Vista University. Lead evaluator for four AdvEd school visits, team member for three additional school visits.
Mr. Dennis W Nath	Dennis Nath received his Master's degree in Media and Technology from Mankato State University, Mankato, Minnesota. He retired after serving 32 years as the district library media specialist for the Mitchell School District in Mitchell, SD. He was recruited to design and furnish a media center/library for Hayah International Academy in Cairo, Egypt, and spent the 2008-2009 school year in the Mideast. Dennis has been a member of AdvancED evaluation teams since 2009 and has assisted on numerous visits in 10 states and serves as a lead evaluator in his home state of South Dakota.

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## Next Steps

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with 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. Consider the Opportunities for Improvement identified throughout the report that are provided by the team in the spirit of continuous improvement and the institution's commitment to improving its capacity to improve student learning.
4. Develop action plans to address the Improvement Priorities identified by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward addressing the Improvement Priorities.
5. Use the report to guide and strengthen the institution's efforts to improve student performance and system effectiveness.
6. Following the External Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the Improvement Priorities. Institutions are required to respond to all Improvement Priorities. 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 address the Improvement Priorities. The accreditation status will be reviewed and acted upon based on the responses to the Improvement Priorities and the resulting improvement.
7. Continue to meet the AdvancED Standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

## About AdvancED

AdvancED is the world's largest education community, representing 32,000 public and private schools and systems across the United States and in 75 countries worldwide and educating 16 million students.

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 became part of AdvancED.

Today, NCA CASI, NWAC, and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED. The Accreditation Divisions of AdvancED share research-based quality standards that cross district, state, regional, national, and international boundaries. Accompanying these standards is a unified and consistent process designed to engage educational institutions in continuous improvement.

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