

Report of the External Review Team for Panhandle Area Educational Consortium

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Table of Contents

Introduction 4

Results 10

 Teaching and Learning Impact 10

 Standard 3 - Teaching and Assessing for Learning 11

 Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement 11

 Findings 12

 Leadership Capacity 14

 Standard 1 - Purpose and Direction 15

 Standard 2 - Governance and Leadership 15

 Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic 15

 Resource Utilization 17

 Standard 4 - Resources and Support Systems 17

 Findings 18

Conclusion 20

 Accreditation Recommendation 22

Addenda 23

 Team Roster 23

 Next Steps 25

 About AdvancED 26

 References 27

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

The Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) External Review Team (Team) began their consideration of the system's internal review materials in April. The actual on-site review occurred May 7th - 10th and was conducted by a team of five. The Lead Evaluator was from Michigan, with one other team member from Alabama. Three other team members were from Florida.

PAEC serves 14 member school districts representing 45,000 students, and also provides contracted services for several additional school districts throughout northern Florida. Florida legislatively restricts participation in Educational Service Agencies (ESA) to primarily rural districts with qualifying enrollment of fewer than 20,000 students. Larger districts may purchase contracted services as needed from PAEC.

The Team accomplished all expected tasks efficiently and unencumbered. The Lead Evaluator (LE) and the PAEC leadership team mutually set up a schedule during pre-review discussions beginning in March. The system provided the required documentation and other review articles in a timely fashion, allowing the Team unbridled access to the work of the system as needed to complete required tasks. Artifacts were provided via a specially designed Google Docs space where they were organized by standard and indicator and supported by follow-up documentation as appropriate.

In preparation for the in-depth exploration, team members participated in a recorded orientation meeting to renew an understanding of expectations and PAEC specific logistics. Frequent two-way communication between the LE and team members ensured understanding of tasks prior to arriving on-site. Consequently, during the first Team meeting on Sunday, the Team was able to connect their pre-work with an engaging discussion of their findings. A special treat of the opening team work session was a group dinner at a local favorite restaurant where the Team and PAEC Leadership Team dined together to be introduced to some local culture.

On Monday, at the central office, team members and system staff attended the Director's Overview, as he shared his young history with the PAEC (he has been in the system for 15 months) and offered his vision for its future. The Review continued with an interview with the Director, during which he highlighted more specific details of the relationship building process in which the system is engaged. The leadership team has led efforts as the system reinvents itself and enriches marketing and branding strategies to better educate the public about the opportunities PAEC offers. The Standards Overview, presented by PAEC's division leaders, described the strengths and challenges faced by the system through the lens of the Educational Service Agency Standards and Indicators. The overview was followed by individual opportunities for the Team to connect with representatives for each of the IEQ Domains for further evidence gathering.

In the afternoon the Team began the process of interviewing board members individually in person and via telephone to further understand the PAEC operation. The PAEC Board of Directors consists of the member district superintendents. Three were interviewed on Monday and an additional five on Tuesday as the Team dispersed across the system to observe operations. The afternoon activities concluded with interviews with community members and parents as team members engaged in opportunities to gain insights into the various perspectives shared by each stakeholder group.

On Tuesday, since PAEC does not operate individual schools, team members did not engage in eleot® observations. The LE and system leadership designed a day filled with a variety of examples of PAEC's normal operation on any given day. Team members met with additional superintendents; talked with migrant students, parents and teachers; observed a teacher recruitment fair; interviewed curriculum, finance and facility administrators; and participated in a Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS) district planning meeting, to name a few of the day's activities. The creative schedule afforded the Team a glimpse into the range of experiences districts receive at the hands of PAEC's outreach to support learning for the students they mutually serve.

Each evening provided the Team time to debrief the findings of the day, collaborating on common findings and examining outliers as observed. It was this combination of productive time spent in interviews, evidence review, observations, and significant team discussions and deliberations that yielded an in-depth and comprehensive collection of feedback with which PAEC can continue to move forward.

Wednesday morning was the time during which the Team confirmed findings and crafted specific feedback for the system. The late morning included a meeting between the Lead Evaluator, Associate Lead Evaluator,

Director and system leadership during which official findings were shared prior to the public release. A PAEC board work session followed in which the Lead Evaluator shared the AdvancED powerpoint presentation including the Team's results.

The Team wishes to extend appreciation for the preparation the system leadership offered as the foundation for a quality External Review. Logistical attention to detail, enhanced by responsive communication from the leadership team representatives, provided seamless opportunities for the Team to accomplish its work, both prior to arriving in the Panhandle area, and once there. Artifacts and documents were provided to adequately support the internal review efforts and offered the Team the opportunity to streamline next steps in facilitating an efficient and thorough follow up on-site. Transparent access, coupled with a commitment to the process as articulated by the leadership team, together with more than 80 stakeholders, enabled the Team to move forward throughout the Review with fervor and as active partners in the process of continuous improvement in support of the educational needs of PAEC children.

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
Board Members	8
Chief Executive Officer/President	1
Administrators	21
Instructional Staff	13
Support Staff	8
Students	12
Parents/Community/Business Leaders	24
Total	87

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 agency's services and programs support the educational needs of its constituent schools/systems through meaningful professional learning experiences.

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
3.1	The agency provides equitable, relevant and targeted support programs and/or services for all schools/systems.	2.80	3.20
3.2	The agency monitors its programs and services to measure effectiveness and to guide ongoing adjustments in delivery.	2.60	2.34
3.3	Agency staff provide professional learning opportunities that engage practitioners in their learning.	3.40	2.87
3.4	The agency uses collaboration as an essential operating principle in the development and delivery of its services and programs.	3.20	2.93
3.5	All agency staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	2.60	2.45
3.6	The agency's support services meet the unique learning needs of its constituent schools/systems.	2.20	2.95

Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement

The agency implements a comprehensive evaluation system that generates a range of data about the effectiveness of the agency and uses the results to guide continuous improvement.

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
5.1	The agency establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive evaluation system.	2.80	2.18
5.2	Professional and support staff throughout the agency continuously collect, analyze and use a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data related to program evaluation and organizational conditions.	2.40	2.01
5.3	The agency's leadership monitors and communicates comprehensive information about learning and the achievement of agency improvement goals to stakeholders.	2.40	2.34

Findings

Improvement Priority

Implement a systematic process to examine and utilize student achievement data to illuminate areas of instructional need and offer programs and services to address those needs in PAEC school districts.

(Indicator 5.2, SF2. Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 5.2

Evidence and Rationale

One goal of PAEC, as evidenced in the Director and staff interviews, the Accreditation Report and the Strategic Plan, was to strengthen Instructional Services to member districts. The Team was further made aware of the districts' instructional needs through stakeholder interviews and program observations. PAEC serves its members and thereby its students by a continuing analysis of student achievement data coupled with changing demographics to provide insight into areas needing assistance, paying special attention to subgroups. Successful programs such as the Migrant Program and Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) were observed to be models for a broader range of programs to serve the needs of all students. PAEC assists districts to discover their greatest instructional needs. They target support for schools by building upon the success of existing programs operating as “pockets of excellence.”

Educational Service Agencies, maintaining a focus on student achievement as well as business services, can make a substantial impact on schools and districts in improving opportunities for students.

Improvement Priority

Utilize trend data to identify, design and implement professional development opportunities unique to constituent districts' needs.

(Indicator 3.6)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.6

Evidence and Rationale

Stakeholder interviews, including both PAEC and district representation, as well as various artifacts revealed that most training requests are the product of conversation and casual in nature. The Review Team did not see evidence that data support training requests. Leaders confirmed that neither PAEC nor member school districts currently have adequate funds to dedicate a single position to drilling into achievement data to drive decision-making. Optimism is high that a pending grant opportunity would help to support this area of need. There appears to be a commonality of needs among some member districts, but each district can benefit by drilling deeply into their respective achievement data to offer supporting evidence for professional learning requests on behalf of the students they serve.

While conversations with constituent organizations can be a starting place for identifying training opportunities, a more valid starting point is student achievement data. Requiring individual districts to present professional learning requests based upon data can encourage member districts to become aware of needs and successes more closely related to student achievement.

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 agency maintains and communicates at all levels of the organization a purpose and direction for continuous improvement that commits to providing programs and services, active learning, and high expectations for professional practice as well as shared values and beliefs.

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
1.1	The agency engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate an agency purpose.	2.80	2.55
1.2	The agency leadership and staff at all levels commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs that include provision of relevant and targeted educational programs and services, equitable support, active engagement in learning, application of knowledge and skills, and high expectations for professional practice.	3.00	3.09
1.3	Leadership of the agency implements a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support learning.	2.60	2.47

Standard 2 - Governance and Leadership

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and support practices that ensure effective administration of the agency.	3.00	3.03
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	3.00	3.17
2.3	The governing body ensures that agency leadership has the autonomy to meet established goals and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.	3.20	3.58
2.4	Leadership and staff throughout the agency foster a culture consistent with the agency's purpose and direction.	3.00	3.08
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the agency's purpose and direction.	3.00	2.75
2.6	The agency's supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice.	2.60	2.49

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	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
Questionnaire Administration	4.00	3.46
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	3.00	3.10

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 agency provides resources, programs and services that support its purpose and direction for all constituent schools/systems.

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.1	The agency 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 agency.	3.60	3.12
4.2	Material and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the agency.	3.00	3.20
4.3	The agency maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all.	3.00	3.30
4.4	The agency demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning in support of the purpose and direction of the agency.	3.80	2.52
4.5	The agency provides, coordinates, and evaluates the effectiveness of programs and services delivered to constituent schools and systems.	2.60	2.36

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.6	The agency provides technology infrastructure and equipment to support the teaching, informational, and operational needs of the agency and the schools/systems it serves.	3.60	3.01

Findings

Powerful Practice

The Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) is successful in recruitment and retention of qualified, dedicated, professional staff who advance the purpose and direction of the agency.

(Indicator 4.1)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 4.1

Evidence and Rationale

The PAEC Strategic Plan, Educational Services Guide, and other artifacts and interviews revealed that PAEC has board policies; district, agency, and department plans; and program specific goals and plans that guide long-term planning throughout the district. The Team noted and appreciated the longevity and commitment of PAEC staff to the schools and communities they serve. The PAEC staff are committed and invested professionals who emphatically serve the constituent districts and communities. PAEC supports the recruitment and retention of beginning teachers through the Promoting Professional Excellence (proPEL) program, the development of aspiring administrators through Student Achievement through Instructional Leadership (SAIL), and the professional development of administrators through the Annual Summer Leadership Conference.

Institutions require access to sufficient resources and systems of support to sustain meaningful efforts resulting in a cycle of continuous improvement. The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (Pan, 2003) findings indicate that a strong relationship exists between available resources and student success, further elaborating that the level of available resources and the deliberate allocation of those resources have a significant influence on educational outcomes. PAEC resources and systems supports are aligned with best practices in the use of available resources to serve the needs of all stakeholders. PAEC supports a culture of family and professional collaboration that allows stakeholders to benefit from a foundation built on cooperation that ultimately advances the purpose and direction of individual stakeholders.

Powerful Practice

The Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) proactively and regularly seeks funding resources to support the purpose and Strategic Plan of the organization, specifically including comprehensive technology services and support provided for school districts and communities.

(Indicator 4.4, Indicator 4.6)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 4.4

Evidence and Rationale

The PAEC Strategic Plan has clearly defined policies and procedures to seek reoccurring revenues, such as the virtual program, managing bids, and contracts with the State of Florida. Grants as well as donations support the strategic planning goals. In interviews with district leaders and PAEC staff, the desire to expand the role of the instructional services division was clearly stated. Evidence submitted by the agency through stakeholder surveys also support the funding initiatives. The Business Division has been very successful in supporting the districts through contracts and bidding processes as well as income generating projects. In stakeholder interviews, the Team frequently heard the Business Division is held in high regard, especially in the area of Risk Management.

The agency provides a modern, fully functional technology infrastructure; state-of-the art equipment; and a highly qualified technical support staff to meet the teaching, learning and operational needs of all stakeholders throughout the districts. One notable project was to provide fiber optic bandwidth to member districts at a very low cost. The project also impacts other agencies in the communities who now are able to access technology resources.

In seeking other resources the agency recently has used Foundation donations to contract with grant writers who will pursue federal grants in support of strategic goals. Through the Migrant Program a new model of expansion has been developed and now encompasses the English Language Learners and the Homeless programs. Combining resources to meet specific needs has allowed many programs to meet their goals. For example, the work of the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resource System (FDLRS) is also focused on the needs of Exceptional Education Students and teachers to create a more financially efficient delivery.

Through purposeful planning and targeted work, PAEC is continually searching for financial avenues to lead their districts to the next level. The goal of this effort is to “be ready when the opportunity comes.”

Conclusion

Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) enjoys a positive culture among staff at the system and constituent district level. New leadership, coupled with a branding and marketing "refresh" have motivated constituents across the system to re-ignite the potential this partnership can have. While resources from the state of Florida have dwindled, PAEC leadership have become resourceful foragers of financial opportunities to benefit the students they serve. Technology partnerships have allowed remote, rural areas to now have Internet access previously unavailable to them. This has not only benefited schools but also the communities they serve within the system. Aggressive grant opportunities are the benefit of a newly formed partnership with a foundation-supported national expert. Collaborative planning in the Risk Management Department was mentioned as one of the key successes of PAEC when district business officials were queried. A creative marketplace, "FL BUY" has been made more accessible through the efforts of PAEC connections with member districts. A cooperative venture by Florida Learns and PAEC produces an Annual Summer Leadership Conference, attended by administrators from around the state.

Challenged with growing poverty, and other changing demographics, the need continues for PAEC to be the heart of creative resource sharing. The system is replete with data, but not as rich with information from those data. There is a fertile environment and potential for broader analysis to guide appropriate responses. A successful migrant program provides a laboratory for strategies that can be grown in other demographics and cultures across the system. Professional learning opportunities guided by data can be more easily tailored to be optimally effective. Data analyses that lead to impactful responses to changing demographics also opens up incredible awareness and opportunities to all students.

Sustaining the healthy culture within PAEC is fundamental to its continued success. Leadership teams engaged in efforts to improve student achievement through increased data analyses, communication and continued effective collaboration will be the foundation. Embracing the opportunities as they present themselves to build on well-functioning structures, traditions, and systems, as well as exercising the courage to change systems when they are not working to their greatest potential, is the basis for continuous improvement. The leadership team from the board/director level on through the districts, appears committed to these ideals. Blending the strongly-rooted ownership in the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium "family," with the strategically placed infusion of new ideas and perspectives can be a wholesome "marriage."

The illumination of the system's areas of strength and success, coupled with an awareness of areas requiring attention, constitute a healthy focus on a better future. PAEC has the opportunity now to utilize the findings of the External Review as an addendum to the direction initiated by their internal reflections and existing improvement activities. As the system continues to build solutions that ensure they are meeting the needs of each and every student, enabling them to be the most successful adult he/she can be, the potential is there to build on successes to stimulate the powerful realization of the hopes and dreams of the entire school community.

It is for the aforementioned reasons that the Team acknowledges the presence of myriad "pockets of excellence" throughout the system. The growth and enhancement of these "pockets" ensure that excellence

and rigor will continue to focus on serving every student, every day as envisioned in the system purpose.

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:

- Implement a systematic process to examine and utilize student achievement data to illuminate areas of instructional need and offer programs and services to address those needs in PAEC school districts.
- Utilize trend data to identify, design and implement professional development opportunities unique to constituent districts' needs.

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	296.92	278.94
Teaching and Learning Impact	271.11	268.48
Leadership Capacity	301.82	293.71
Resource Utilization	326.67	286.27

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

Team Roster

Member	Brief Biography
<p>Kathy Sergeant</p>	<p>Ms. Kathryn Sergeant is an Educational Consultant, who previously served as the AdvancED Michigan State Director, a position she held for seven and a half years following six years as the Michigan Associate Director. In those positions, she coordinated the accreditation activities and provided professional learning for schools and school systems throughout Michigan. In addition to doctoral coursework in the areas of Leadership and Educational Technology, Ms. Sergeant holds a Master of Science in Educational Administration, a Master of Arts in Counselor Education and a Bachelor of Science in Education.</p> <p>Ms. Sergeant has experience as a teacher, counselor, and administrator in K-12 education with most of this at the high school level, and has also taught at the university level. She has published articles and has made numerous state, regional and national presentations. Most recently, in her position with AdvancED, she was engaged in the Training Development and Deployment Team, and served as a Lead Evaluator for Schools and Systems throughout the country, as well as multiple DoDEA institutions around the world.</p>
<p>Mrs. Sandy Edwards</p>	<p>Mrs. Edwards is a retired educator from the School District of Escambia County, Pensacola, Florida. She served as an elementary teacher, resource teacher, principal, and district-level director for the District. At the District level, she coordinated the Differentiated Accountability requirements in collaboration with the Florida Department of Education. She also directed the work of the Office of School Choice and the ESOL program. She has served on accreditation teams in Florida as well as other states.</p> <p>Mrs. Edwards graduated from Florida State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education and the University of West Florida with a Master of Arts degree in Educational Leadership. She is currently certified in early childhood education, elementary education, the Principalship (K-12), and ESOL (K-12).</p> <p>Mrs. Edwards has served as the President of the District's Elementary Principals' Association and the Escambia Association for Administrators in Education. Since her retirement, she has been active in several volunteer activities, including mentoring young assistant principals and serves on the Executive Board of the Escambia County Public Schools Foundation.</p>
<p>Ms. Martha Cieplinski</p>	<p>Mrs. Cieplinski has a BSE with majors in Biology and Language Arts, and a Masters in Educational Leadership. Her 47 years of professional experiences include being the Director of a charter military academy, assistant principal for curriculum at a school of 2750 students, classroom teacher and virtual teacher. Her preferred areas of interest are curriculum and classroom instruction. Her achievements include being a National Trainer for the AFT in Instructional Strategies that Work in the Classroom (2007 - 2012), and a certified CRISS trainer (2003-2012).</p> <p>Certifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> eleot Certification (Active) Early Learning External Review Certifications

Member	Brief Biography
<p>Ms. Carol Martin</p>	<p>As an educator of 30 years in Alabama Carol Martin has the same enthusiasm for our career as when she began! Ms. Martin's career began in her high school English classroom; later she became the principal of her own high school, served as a high school administrator for 18 years, and now enjoys a district leadership role of Director of Instruction and Intervention in Sylacauga City Schools. She works with PreK-12 in her school system, leading Assessment, RTI, Accountability, Professional Development, and other areas. Ms. Martin's Ed.S. degree is in Educational Leadership. She is a Communications major who enjoys presentations and working with teams. Ms. Martin has organized, led, and served on SACS and AdvancED team processes in several states, Model School teams, and Middle and High Schools That Work teams. She loves to share experiences and enthusiasm with others as they focus on improving schools for all students.</p>
<p>Mr. Angel R. Teron</p>	<p>Angel R. Teron is currently the psychometrician in the office of Evaluation & Accountability in Lake County School District, Florida. He has a Bachelor's Degree in Literature, Master's Degree in Educational Leadership, and a Specialist Degree in Curriculum and Instruction. He completed his coursework and is working on his dissertation for a doctorate in Curriculum and Assessment from the University of West Florida.</p> <p>Mr. Teron has taught a myriad of courses at the high school level ranging from Intensive Reading to Advanced Placement Literature and Composition. His initial certifications are in English 5-9 and English 6-12. He has completed his Reading Endorsement and the English for Speakers of Other Languages certification. Additionally, he has also taught at Lake Sumter State College as an adjunct instructor.</p> <p>In his current position in the office of Evaluation and Accountability, he collaborates with the Academic Services Department to facilitate the development of psychometrically sound, valid and reliable assessments to inform ongoing instructional practice at the classroom, school, and district level. He provides professional development on the writing and reviewing of standards-aligned classroom assessments and the use of assessment results to inform instructional practice. He reviews external requests to conduct research in Lake District and collaborates with district stakeholders to establish and implement strategies to facilitate achieving district and school goals, including supporting the School Improvement Plan (SIP) through the Continuous Improvement Management System (CIMS).</p> <p>Mr. Teron is a member of the Florida Educational Research Association (FERA) and has served on the Proposal Review Committee for the last two years. He is also a member of the Florida Organization of Instructional Leaders (FOIL). He is passionate about Curriculum & Instruction and the use of classroom, school, and district results to inform on-going instructional practices.</p>

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 leader in providing improvement and accreditation services to education providers of all types in their pursuit of excellence in serving students. AdvancED serves as a trusted partner to more than 32,000 public and private schools and school systems – enrolling more than 20 million students - across the United States and 70 countries.

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 school system, 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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