External Review

New Dimensions High School

Dr. Christina L Cafiero, Director
4900 Old Pleasant Hill Road
Kissimmee, FL 34759

Ms. Valerie Sommerville, Lead Evaluator

Date: December 6, 2012 - December 7, 2012

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Introduction to the External Review Process

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

The Findings section presents the External Review Team's evaluation of the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators. It also includes Powerful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement identified by the External Review Team, observations of the Learning Environment, as well as Required Actions.

Accreditation Standards and Indicators

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

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

Standard 1: Purpose and Direction

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

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

Standard		Standard Performance Level
The school maintains and communicates a purpose and direction that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.		3.0
Indicator		**Source of Evidence**	**Performance Level**
1.1	The school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	•Survey results •Examples of communications to stakeholders about the school's purpose (i.e. website, newsletters, annual report, student handbook) •Purpose statements - past and present	3
1.2	The school's leadership and staff commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning and supports challenging, equitable educational programs and learning experiences for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills.	•Agendas and/or minutes that reference a commitment to the components of the school's statement of purpose •Survey results •The school's statement of purpose	3
1.3	The school's leadership implements a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	•Survey results •The school data profile •The school continuous improvement plan	3

Standard 2: Governance and Leadership

Governance and leadership are key factors in raising institutional quality. Leaders, both local administrators and governing boards/authorities, are responsible for ensuring all learners achieve while also managing many other facets of an institution. Institutions that function effectively do so without tension between the governing board/authority, administrators, and educators and have established relationships of mutual respect and a shared vision (Feuerstein & Opfer, 1998). In a meta-analysis of school leadership research, Leithwood & Sun (2012) found that leaders (school and governing boards/authority) can significantly "influence school conditions through their achievement of a shared vision and agreed-on goals for the organization, their high expectations and support of organizational members, and practices that strengthen school culture and foster collaboration within the organization." With the increasing demands of accountability placed on institutional leaders, leaders who empower others need considerable autonomy and involve their school communities to attain school improvement goals. Leaders who engage in such practices experience a greater level of success (Fink & Brayman, 2006). Similarly, governing boards/authorities that focus on policy-making are more likely to allow school leaders the autonomy to make decisions that impact teachers and students and are less responsive to politicization than boards/authorities that respond to vocal citizens (Greene, 1992).

AdvancED has found through its own evaluation of best practices in 30,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution has leaders who are advocates for the institution's vision and improvement efforts. The leaders provide direction and allocate resources to implement curricular and co-curricular programs that enable students to achieve expectations for their learning. Leaders encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for school improvement among stakeholders. The institution's policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation.

Standard		Standard Performance Level
The school operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and school effectiveness.		3.33
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the school.	•Governing body policies, procedures, and practices •Staff handbooks •Interview with board member, school leadership, teachers and staff; external financial audit: leadership roles and responsibilities	3

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	•Governing body minutes relating to training •Governing body policies on roles and responsibilities, conflict of interest •Governing code of ethics •Interviews with board members and leadership team	3
2.3	The governing body ensures that the school leadership has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.	•Roles and responsibilities of school leadership •Maintenance of consistent academic oversight, planning, and resource allocation •Agendas and minutes of meetings •Interviews with board members and school leadership team	4
2.4	Leadership and staff foster a culture consistent with the school's purpose and direction.	•Interviews with all stakeholder groups: School's Executive Summary	4
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the school's purpose and direction.	•Minutes from meetings with stakeholders •Interviews with all stakeholders; school's website	3
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice and student success.	•Supervision and evaluation documents with criteria for improving professional practice and student success noted •School's executive summary; teacher growth plans; teacher and leadership interviews; leadership evaluation template	3

Powerful Practices   *Indicator*

1. The governing board consistently protects, supports, and respects the autonomy   2.3
    of the school leaders to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage
    the day-to-day operations effectively.

    The governing board members are active in their businesses or in community
    servies, live in close proximity, are parents, or were former employees. They are
    dedicated and responsive to the school leaders' needs. Board members
    recognize their role at board meetings as giving support, direction and advice.
    Additionally, they are advocates of the school at civic meetings, business
    meetings, and community events. The school's reputation has benefited greatly.
    New Dimensions High School is viewed by the Osceola County School District as
    a model, by parents as an outstanding provider of education and personal support
    for their children, and by former employees as a small, positive environment for
    staff and students to build positive relationships.

2. The school staff fosters a positive school culture using open lines of   2.4
    communication with all stakeholders.

    The school staff engage stakeholders effectively in support of the school's purpose
    and direction using multiple methods of communication. At interviews,
    stakeholders expressed that the school staff are dedicated, accessible,
    responsive, and open. The team finds that stakeholders share a sense of
    community and collaboration at the school. Stakeholders attribute the positive
    learning environment to a caring and dedicated staff who know each child by name
    and to the school's "no tolerance for bullying" policy which allows students to focus
    their efforts on learning.

Standard 3: Teaching and Assessing for Learning

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

AdvancED has found through its own evaluation of best practices in 30,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning that provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Teachers use proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process. Teachers provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations. Teachers give students feedback to improve their performance.

Standard			Standard Performance Level
The school's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning.			3.17
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.1	The school's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at the next level.	•Lesson plans •Posted learning objectives •Representative samples of student work across courses •Course descriptions •Interviews with students and teachers	3

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.2	Curriculum, instruction, and assessment are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice.	•Curriculum guides •Products – scope and sequence, curriculum maps •Lesson plans aligned to the curriculum •Interview with teachers	3
3.3	Teachers engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	•Teacher evaluation criteria •Professional development focused on these strategies •Examples of teacher use of technology as an instructional resource •Examples of student use of technology as a learning tool •Student work demonstrating the application of knowledge •Findings from supervisor walk-thrus and observations •Interdisciplinary projects •Interviews with school's leadership team, teachers, students	4
3.4	School leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	•Curriculum maps •Documentation of collection of lesson plans and grade books •Supervision and evaluation procedures •Administrative classroom observation protocols and logs •Interviews with school's leadership team, teachers and students	3

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.5	Teachers participate in collaborative learning communities to improve instruction and student learning.	•Examples of cross curricular projects, interdisciplinary instruction, and classroom action research project •Common language, protocols and reporting tools •Agendas and minutes of collaborative learning committees •Calendar/schedule of learning community meetings •Peer coaching guidelines and procedures •Examples of improvements to content and instructional practice resulting from collaboration •Interviews with school leadership team, teachers, students, parents	3
3.6	Teachers implement the school's instructional process in support of student learning.	•Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance •Interviews with teachers; syllabi; lesson plans	3
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the school's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	•Professional learning calendar with activities for instructional support of new staff •Descriptions and schedules of mentoring, coaching, and induction programs with references to school beliefs and values about teaching and learning •Personnel manuals with information related to new hires including mentoring, coaching, and induction practices •Interviews with school leadership team, parents, students	3
3.8	The school engages families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keeps them informed of their children's learning progress.	•List of varied activities and communications modes with families, e.g., info portal, online, newsletters, parent centers, academic nights, open house, early release days •Calendar outlining when and how families are provided information on child's progress •Interviews with parents and external stakeholders	3

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.9	The school has a formal structure whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the school who supports that student's educational experience.	•Survey results •Interviews with students, parents, teachers, school leadership team; faculty handbook	4
3.10	Grading and reporting are based on clearly defined criteria that represent the attainment of content knowledge and skills and are consistent across grade levels and courses.	•Evaluation process for grading and reporting practices •Sample report cards for each grade level and for all courses •Sample communications to stakeholders about grading and reporting •Policies, processes, and procedures on grading and reporting	3
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	•Evaluation tools for professional learning •Interviews with all stakeholders; professional development attendance rosters	3
3.12	The school provides and coordinates learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	•List of learning support services and student population served by such services •Use of Plato and Virtual School; bullying prevention plan: ESE meetings/consultations	3

Powerful Practices	*Indicator*

1. Students initiate, research, prepare and present a Senior Project about a career or profession for which they have a strong interest.

   3.3

   After interviewing stakeholders and reviewing artifacts, the team learned about the complexity of the Senior Project. The team agrees that project-based education provides students the opportunity to learn many new skills and experiences outside of their current scope. Students gain valuable tools for post-secondary education, employment, and life.

2. The school has a formal mentoring structure whereby each student has one mentor who supports their needs throughout their education at the school. Additionally, the school has an informal mentoring structure whereby all school staff know every student and their parent or guardian.

   3.9

   A close-knit family atmosphere is clearly evident throughout the school. At interviews, administration, instructors, staff, and students express their satisfaction with the knowledge that all students are well known and have one assigned adult advocate at the school. This process is formalized in the school's policies. The school staff also work closely with one another to immediately share necessary information about each student to provide daily educational or personal support. The students enjoy this environment and thrive academically from the positive support.

Standard 4: Resources and Support Systems

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

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

Standard			Standard Performance Level
The school has resources and provides services that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.			2.57
Indicator		**Source of Evidence**	**Performance Level**
4.1	Qualified professional and support staff are sufficient in number to fulfill their roles and responsibilities necessary to support the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program.	•School budgets for the last three years •Documentation of highly qualified staff •Interviews with school leadership team and teachers;	3
4.2	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the school.	•Alignment of budget with school purpose and direction •Interviews with board members and teachers: Self Assessment	3
4.3	The school maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	•Tour of school; Interviews with students and staff; Classroom observations; Leadership presentation	3
4.4	Students and school personnel use a range of media and information resources to support the school's educational programs.	•Survey results •Self Assessment; School's Website	3
4.5	The technology infrastructure supports the school's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	•Friendly Computer Company Handbook; Technology Inventory	2

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.6	The school provides support services to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	•Social classes and services, e.g., bullying, character education •List of support services available to students •Interview with school leadership team; link on school's website to community resources	2
4.7	The school provides services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.	•Description of IEP process •Interviews with teachers; mentorships	2

Standard 5: Using Results for Continuous Improvement

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

AdvancED has found through its own evaluation of best practices in 30,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly defined performance measures. The system is used to assess student performance on expectations for student learning, evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, and determine strategies to improve student performance. The institution implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns the functions of the school with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained, and the institution demonstrates progress in improving student performance and institution effectiveness.

Standard		Standard Performance Level
The school implements a comprehensive assessment system that generates a range of data about student learning and school effectiveness and uses the results to guide continuous improvement.		2.6
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.1	The school establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	•Brief description of student assessment system including range of data produced from standardized and local assessments on student learning and school performance •Evidence that assessments are reliable and bias free •Self Assessment; Osceola County District Assessment Calendar; Interview with teachers and school administrators; Information from the CIM notebooks	2

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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.	•Written protocols and procedures for data collection and analysis •Interviews with teachers; CIM notebooks; Self Assessment; PLC Logs; IPDPs	3
5.3	Professional and support staff are trained in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.	•Professional learning schedule specific to the use of data •Documentation of attendance and training related to data use •Training materials specific to the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data •CIM Notebooks; Interview with teachers	3
5.4	The school engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level.	•Student surveys •Agendas, minutes of meetings related to analysis of data •Evidence of student growth •Evidence of student success at the next level •Parent Survey; Interview with teachers and administration	2
5.5	Leadership monitors and communicates comprehensive information about student learning, conditions that support student learning, and the achievement of school improvement goals to stakeholders.	•Minutes of board meetings regarding achievement of student learning goals •Executive summaries of student learning reports to stakeholder groups •Self Assessment; Interviews with teachers, external stakeholders and parents; SAC agendas; PLC agendas and minutes	3

Learning Environment

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

Observations of classrooms or other learning venues are conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes per observation. External review team members conduct multiple observations during the review process and provide ratings on 30 items based on a 4 point scale with 4=very evident, 3=evident, 2=somewhat evident, and 1=not observed. The following provides the aggregate average score across multiple observations for each of the 7 learning environments included in ELEOT.

Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool

Environments	*Level*
A. Equitable Learning Environment	2.799999952316284
B. High Expectations Environment	3.299999952316284
C. Supportive Learning Environment	3.4000000953674316
D. Active Learning Environment	3.299999952316284
E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment	2.9000000953674316
F. Well-Managed Learning Environment	3.4000000953674316
G. Digital Learning Environment	1.7999999523162842

Conclusion

Summary of the External Review

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

New Dimensions High School, 4900 Old Pleasant Hill Road, Kissimmee, FL 34759, began setting its tradition of high standards on August 10, 1998 when it first opened its doors in rented facilities to 87 9th and 10th graders as Osceola County's first public charter school. Today in its 15th year of operation, the school has an enrollment of 400 9th through 12th grade students.

Since opening in 1998, the school has purchased the original building, constructed an additional classroom building housing a computer lab, a science lab and four classrooms. In 2001, the school became the first charter school in the country to partner with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to guarantee funding to construct a gym and a media center. Then again in 2012, the school partnered with the USDA to guarantee funding to construct a new classroom building housing seven classrooms. The school has maximized the use of its land while expanding educational services to students.

This public charter school is an alternative for the students and parents of Osceola County who desire smaller class sizes and more individualized instruction. The school follows a 4 x 4 block schedule from which students can earn 8 credits per year from instructors certified by the State of Florida. Additionally, qualified students may take dual enrollment or advanced placement classes.

The school received its initial accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) under the Osceola School District umbrella. During 2003, the school received its own accreditation from SACS and continues to maintain its accreditation status.

An External Review of New Dimensions High School took place on December 6 and 7, 2012.
After carefully preparing and planning with team members and school leaders, the External Review team arrived at Buena Vista Suites, Orlando, FL on December 5, 2012. The first team meeting was at 4:30pm in the hotel. At this orientation meeting, team members disclosed that they each attended AdvancED training on the new standards and the new protocol, completed the online training software for team members and the online introduction and training for ELEOT. Two team members were preparing for an External Review at their respective school in the next two months. Three of the team members had not served as an AdvancED team member before.

The team traveled to the school for a Dessert Reception and to interview the governing board members and school leaders. The team also saw their workroom, location of artifacts and discussed final logistics at the school and at the hotel.

The team traveled back to the hotel discussing first impressions, the first rating on the standards

workbooks, and driving arrangements.

The team's initial impression was that the school appeared well prepared for the External Review. The governing board, district staff and school leaders were honest and open about the school's strengths, successes and opportunities to improve. The team were offered full access to staff and documents needed to research and determine our ratings for the standard indicators.

From December 5th to December 7th, 2012, the team interviewed 56 stakeholders: the governing board and Osceola County School's district administration (8), the school leaders (2), parents including parents who are also School Advisory Committee members (11), external stakeholders (4), instructors (12), non-instructional staff (3), support staff (2-teachers with dual roles), and most importantly students (14).

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

Throughout the Executive Summary, the Self Assessment, the school leaders' PowerPoint presentation, the tour of the school, stakeholder interviews, artifacts, and classroom visits, the team read of, heard about, and observed the expectations and delivery of high standards in education and support services for student success. The dedication and energy displayed by the school leaders are contagious and motivate staff to model the same to students, parents, other stakeholders, and one another. Additionally, the team witnessed a positive culture filled with mutual respect and personal support. These discoveries resulted in some indicator ratings being raised.

As a result, the team developed the following powerful practices reflective of the high standards and the culture. (2.3) The governing board has full confidence that the school leaders will carry out the mission of the school and will meet goals for achievement and instruction. (2.4) The school leaders foster a positive culture in which all stakeholders build positive relationships and are free to learn. (3.3) The instructors engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement including project based learning. Each student completes and presents a Senior Project about an occupation or career of interest. (3.9) The school assigns a mentor to each student and encourages additional informal mentors. The team learned that every staff member knows every student and the staff network immediately to support and daily needs of each student. And students help each other.

While reviewing artifacts for each standard, the team realized that the dedication of the school leaders and their active involvement fulfilling all of the school's daily, periodic and annual responsibilities lead to some processes being less formalized. These discoveries resulted in some indicator ratings being lowered.

As a result, the team developed one required action and opportunities for improvement. (4.5) The required action asks the school to formalize their technology planning process. The opportunities for improvement are reflective of current processes becoming more formal. (1.3) Formalize a continuous improvement process that includes clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning. (2.6) Formalize the governing board's evaluation process of the school leaders. (4.7) Formalize the process used to provide students and families with support services. (5.1) Formalize a comprehensive

student assessment system. (5.4) Formalize a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness and success at the next level.

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

After interviewing the governing board members, the school leaders, instructors, parents and students, the team gained insight about instruction, instructors, students and expectations. The team chose to visit classrooms based on subject and grade level interests. The team's findings were consistent. Most classrooms visited were scored with a four or a three in each of the areas on the ELEOT form. The final value in each of the areas was lower due to scores of one (1) for not observed.

Team members came back from the classroom visits stating how impressed they were with the classrooms, the students and the learning environment. Quality learning was taking place.

The team was also impressed with the cleanliness of the learning environment. The halls were filled with motivational messages, up and coming events, expectations, and the school's mission.

The daily announcements were upbeat and included the reading of the school's mission.

And students were calm, respectful, well mannered, and proud of their school.

The External Review of New Dimensions High School went very smoothly. AdvancEd picked a wonderful blend of team members who each brought knowledge, experience and personal strengths to the team. As a result, school staff were complimentary of the team's professionalism and of the team's ability to help staff be comfortable during the visit.

In return, the team was very grateful for the excellent preparations completed by the school leaders and stakeholders. The quality of the preparations increased the efficiency of the review. Many thanks to a key staff member who surrendered their space thus providing a wonderful workroom and interview room for the team. And, thanks to the school leaders for arranging excellent accommodations for the team's stay which included an executive board room, free wireless internet access, and discounted meals served in the board room. The team is grateful for the kindness and hospitality offered from all stakeholders.

New Dimensions High School is an excellent school offering quality education to their students. The External Review team highly recommends reaffirmation of their accreditation.

Required Actions

1. Formalize a technology plan to improve educational technology, technology support and the school's infrastructure.

Primary Indicator(s) or Assurance(s):
4.5

After interviewing stakeholders and reviewing artifacts, the team did not find a formal technology plan. Stakeholders agree that the school's financial resources are limited which prevents the school from fully funding all desired upgrades. The school would improve their school effectiveness by formalizing a technology plan including the assessment of educational technolgy needs, the assessment of technology support needs and the assessment of the school's infrastructure in relation to the school's growth. A short range and long range technology plan would allow administration to formalize objectives, budget by objectives, and schedule annual updates, support services, and improvements.

Addenda

Next Steps

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

Celebrating Accreditation

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

About AdvancED

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

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