

Report of the External Review for Piedmont Community Charter School

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North Central Association on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC), and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) are accreditation divisions of AdvancED.

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Introduction to the External Review

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

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

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

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

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

Part I: Findings

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

Accreditation Standards and Indicators

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

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

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

Average Indicator Score for this Institution	3.12
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Standard 1: 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.

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

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

Standard 1			
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.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
1.1	The school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • Minutes from meetings related to development of the school's purpose • Examples of communications to stakeholders about the school's purpose (i.e. website, newsletters, annual report, student handbook) • Communication plan to stakeholders regarding the school's purpose • Interviews • Purpose statements - past and present • New Mission Statement, Core Values, Portrait of a Graduate Reports of ad hoc committees on Attrition, math and science, community spirit. 	3.0
1.2	The school's leadership and staff commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning and supports challenging, equitable educational programs and learning experiences for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Observations • The school's statement of purpose • Accreditation Report 	2.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
1.3	The school's leadership implements a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Accreditation Report • The school continuous improvement plan • Original Vision statement New Mission Statement, Core Values, Portrait of a Graduate • Five ad hoc committees emerged from the strategic planning initiative, but the school improvement plan is not aligned with Strategic Planning. 	2.0

Powerful Practices

Indicator

1. The Strategic Planning Process, which began in January 2013, has given direction to PCCS for the next several years.

1.1

Through the vision of the board, teachers, administration, and the community, PCCS has a "Portrait of a Graduate" that guides them as they prepare students to be lifelong learners and successful adults.

When a school engages a broad base of stakeholders in identifying its purpose and direction and beliefs about teaching and learning, it creates a culture committed to doing what is necessary to ensure the fruition of its vision and mission.

Opportunities for Improvement

Indicator

1. Align the School Improvement Plan with the Strategic Plan.

1.3

The school recently completed a comprehensive strategic planning process during the past year. Aligning the School Improvement Plan with the goals of the recently developed strategic plan is the critical next step in organizational development.

Strategic goals should drive the School Improvement Plan, and the School Improvement Plan operationalizes the strategic goals.

Standard 2: The school operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and school 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 2			
The school operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and school effectiveness.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governing body policies, procedures, and practices • Accreditation Report • Interviews • Communications to stakeholder about policy revisions • Board Minutes 	4.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governing body minutes relating to training • Communication plan to inform all staff on code of ethics, responsibilities, conflict of interest • Assurances, certifications • Interviews • Governing body policies on roles and responsibilities, conflict of interest • Governing code of ethics 	3.0
2.3	The governing body ensures that the school leadership has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles and responsibilities of school leadership • Accreditation Report • Stakeholder input and feedback • Interviews • Head of School Job Description 	4.0
2.4	Leadership and staff foster a culture consistent with the school's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of collaboration and shared leadership • Interviews • Examples of decisions aligned with the school's statement of purpose • Teacher Evaluation Process 	3.0
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the school's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes from meetings with stakeholders • Copies of surveys or screen shots from online surveys • Survey responses • Involvement of stakeholders in a school improvement plan • Communication plan • Accreditation Report • Interviews 	4.0
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice and student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of professional development offerings and plans tied specifically to the results from supervision and evaluation • Governing body policy on supervision and evaluation 	3.0

Powerful Practices**Indicator**

- | | | |
|----|---|-----|
| 1. | <p>The Board's policies provide the framework for the effective administration of the school.</p> <p>A review of the policies, procedures, and practices and board minutes clearly indicate the policies provide guidance for the school. They provide for the autonomy for school leaders to make decisions in support of the school's purpose and direction with organizational conditions that ensure quality of learning.</p> <p>Well structured policy creates the organizational conditions necessary for optimum conditions to support teaching and learning.</p> | 2.1 |
| 2. | <p>The board ensures school leaders have the autonomy to manage the day-to-day operations of the school.</p> <p>The review of policies confirm and interviews substantiate, board members understand, and adhere to, their role as policy makers.</p> <p>The capacity of the school to accomplish goals for achievement, instruction, and school effectiveness is increased when roles are clearly defined and leadership at all levels is provided the autonomy necessary to effectively manage day-to-day operations.</p> | 2.3 |
| 3. | <p>School leadership consistently engages stakeholders in support of the school's purpose and direction.</p> <p>Interview, the communication plan, survey responses, and the work of the ad-hoc committees for Strategic Areas of Focus are examples of the appropriate levels of broad base of stakeholder involvement in decisions related to instruction and organizational effectiveness.</p> <p>When stakeholders are provided opportunities for input into decisions it creates a climate of trust and collaboration and ensures a broad base of support for the achievement of school goals.</p> | 2.5 |

Standard 3: The school's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student 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 to their highest potential and be prepared for a successful future. The positive influence an effective educator has on learning is a combination of "student motivation, parental involvement" and the "quality of leadership" (Ding & Sherman, 2006). Research also suggests that quality educators must have a variety of quantifiable and intangible characteristics that include strong communication skills, knowledge of content, and knowledge of how to teach the content. The institution's curriculum and instructional program should develop learners' skills that lead them to think about the world in complex ways (Conley, 2007) and prepare them to have knowledge that extends beyond the academic areas. In order to achieve these goals, teachers must have pedagogical skills as well as content knowledge (Baumert, J., Kunter, M., Blum, W., Brunner, M., Voxx, T., Jordan, A., Klusmann, U., Krauss, S., Nuebrand, M., & Tsai, Y., 2010). The acquisition and refinement of teachers' pedagogical skills occur most effectively through collaboration and professional development. These are a "necessary approach to improving teacher quality" (Colbert, J., Brown, R., Choi, S., & Thomas, S., 2008). According to Marks, Louis, and Printy (2002), staff members who engage in "active organizational learning also have higher achieving students in contrast to those that do not." Likewise, a study conducted by Horng, Klasik, and Loeb (2010), concluded that leadership in effective institutions "supports teachers by creating collaborative work environments." Institutional leaders have a responsibility to provide experiences, resources, and time for educators to engage in meaningful professional learning that promotes student learning and educator quality.

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

Standard 3			
The school's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.1	The school's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at the next level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey results • Lesson plans • Interviews • Accreditation Report • Posted learning objectives • Observations 	3.0

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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum guides • A description of the systematic review process for curriculum, instruction, and assessment • Common assessments • Interviews • Accreditation Report • Products – scope and sequence, curriculum maps • Lesson plans aligned to the curriculum 	4.0
3.3	Teachers engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of teacher use of technology as an instructional resource • Interviews • Observations • Examples of student use of technology as a learning tool • Student work demonstrating the application of knowledge • Accreditation Report 	2.0
3.4	School leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision and evaluation procedures • Surveys results • Interviews • Examples of improvements to instructional practices resulting from the evaluation process • Administrative classroom observation protocols and logs • Accreditation Report 	4.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.5	Teachers participate in collaborative learning communities to improve instruction and student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of cross curricular projects, interdisciplinary instruction, and classroom action research project • Accreditation Report • Agendas and minutes of collaborative learning committees • Calendar/schedule of learning community meetings • Peer coaching guidelines and procedures • Interviews 	3.0
3.6	Teachers implement the school's instructional process in support of student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Interviews • Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance • Accreditation Report 	3.0
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the school's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • 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 	4.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.8	The school engages families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keeps them informed of their children's learning progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey results • Interviews • Volunteer program with variety of options for participation • List of varied activities and communications modes with families, e.g., info portal, online, newsletters, parent centers, academic nights, open house, early release days • Calendar outlining when and how families are provided information on child's progress • Accreditation Report • Parental/family/caregiver involvement plan including activities, timeframes, and evaluation process • Teacher web pages 	4.0
3.9	The school has a formal structure whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the school who supports that student's educational experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • Survey results • Interviews 	2.0
3.10	Grading and reporting are based on clearly defined criteria that represent the attainment of content knowledge and skills and are consistent across grade levels and courses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • Sample report cards for each grade level and for all courses • Interviews • Sample communications to stakeholders about grading and reporting • Policies, processes, and procedures on grading and reporting 	3.0
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Survey results • Accreditation Report • Challenge Foundation provides rich professional growth opportunities Book Study (Teach Like a Champion) 	4.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.12	The school provides and coordinates learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Interviews • List of learning support services and student population served by such services • Accreditation Report • Training and professional learning related to research on unique characteristics of learning • Data used to identify unique learning needs of students 	3.0

Powerful Practices**Indicator**

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 1. | <p>The school employs a systematic review process for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.</p> <p>Through interviews and document review the team substantiated teachers meet during common planning time to collaboratively plan lessons. In addition, they review Domain maps, analyze MAP, mClass assessments, reading benchmark, and EOC and EOG results to inform decision-making related to making needed adjustments to curriculum and instruction.</p> <p>Systematic processes to ensure timely and authentic adjustments to the curriculum and instructional strategies increase the capacity of the school to meet student instructional needs.</p> | 3.2 |
| 2. | <p>The school leaders systematically monitor and support instruction.</p> <p>The administrative monitoring and completion of the Professional Development Plans and the consistent use of drop-in observations and implementation of the administrative classroom protocols and logs to provide ongoing feedback are the processes utilized to support the growth of teachers. Interviews substantiated the efficacy of these processes.</p> <p>The use of systematic processes to support and monitor expected instructional practices creates an organizational climate wherein each professional is provided the support necessary to successfully deliver instruction to the optimum benefit of students.</p> | 3.4 |
| 3. | <p>The school provides systematic mentoring for beginning teachers aligned with the school's purpose and direction.</p> <p>Interviews and document review reveal the school provides systematic support for beginning teachers in a variety of ways. Each teacher is assigned a well-qualified mentor. In addition, the department and grade level chairs provide support within the context of meetings and informal discussions. The teachers receive administrative support through the professional growth model of supervision.</p> <p>Ensuring that beginning teachers are provided systematic support aligned with the school's purpose and direction and instructional initiatives promotes their success as a professional as it increases their level of competence and expertise and results in higher levels of student learning.</p> | 3.7 |
| 4. | <p>Teachers communicate with parents and other stakeholders to ensure that student learning and behavior goals are met.</p> <p>Many practices are currently in place to ensure consistent, appropriate, and timely feedback. Examples are teacher emails to parents, the director's calls to families, and parent conferences.</p> | 3.8 |
| 5. | <p>The Challenge Foundation provides rich professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators.</p> <p>Piedmont Community Charter School has access to high quality professional development through the resources of the Challenge Foundation. These are excellent professional development opportunities for PCCS staff.</p> | 3.11 |

Opportunities for Improvement**Indicator**

1. Develop a formal structure that provides opportunities for staff to build strong relationships with students.

3.9

This system should identify and support the social, emotional, and academic strengths and needs of all students. It should also enhance peer relationships by providing time to explore strategies for building community, resolving conflicts and appreciating differences.

Standard 4: The school has resources and provides services that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.

Institutions, regardless of their size, need access to sufficient resources and systems of support to be able to engage in sustained and meaningful efforts that result in a continuous improvement cycle. Indeed, a study conducted by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (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 30,000 institutions in the AdvancED network that a successful institution has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, meets special needs, and complies with applicable regulations. The institution employs and allocates staff members who are well qualified for their assignments. The institution provides a safe learning environment for students and staff. The institution provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff members to improve their effectiveness. The institution ensures compliance with applicable governmental regulations.

Standard 4			
The school has resources and provides services that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.1	Qualified professional and support staff are sufficient in number to fulfill their roles and responsibilities necessary to support the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Interviews • Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement and retention of professional and support staff • Accreditation Report • Documentation of highly qualified staff 	3.0
4.2	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • Examples of efforts of school leaders to secure necessary material and fiscal resources • School schedule • Interviews • Observations 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.3	The school maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Survey results • Interviews • Accreditation Report • Documentation of emergency procedures such as fire drills, evacuation and other emergency procedures. • Safety committee responsibilities, meeting schedules, and minutes 	3.0
4.4	Students and school personnel use a range of media and information resources to support the school's educational programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Accreditation Report • Survey results • Technology Initiative in Strategic Plan 	3.0
4.5	The technology infrastructure supports the school's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology plan and budget to improve technology services and infrastructure • Observations • Assessments to inform development of technology plan • Survey results • Policies relative to technology use • Interviews 	3.0
4.6	The school provides support services to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student assessment system for identifying student needs • Survey results • Accreditation Report • Interviews • Social classes and services, e.g., bullying, character education • List of support services available to students • Observations 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.7	The school provides services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of services available related to counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning • Accreditation Report • Survey results • Description of IEP process • Interviews • Description of referral process 	3.0

Powerful Practices**Indicator**

1. Students cooperate and show effort in the classroom.

4.2

Teachers and administrators have high standards for student behavior, and students behave very well. Behavioral expectations are supported by a strong character development program. Students and staff have developed relationships of mutual respect.

This contributes to the warm, inviting environment of both campuses.

Standard 5: 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.

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

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

Standard 5			
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.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.1	The school establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • Interviews • Brief description of student assessment system including range of data produced from standardized and local assessments on student learning and school performance • K3 Scott Foresman Benchmark Assessments • NWEA MAP testing (2-8) • BOG (3) • EOG (38) • EOC (912) • MSL (68) 	3.0

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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • List of data sources related to student learning, instruction, program effectiveness, and conditions that support learning • Accreditation Report • Common Planning in PLCs Monday Meetings NWEA MAP Tests 	3.0
5.3	Professional and support staff are trained in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Professional learning schedule specific to the use of data • Documentation of attendance and training related to data use • Accreditation Report • Administration met with Kristen Rodriguez for training on analyzing NWEA MAP data/scores/standard error/retesting 	3.0
5.4	The school engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of process for analyzing data to determine verifiable improvement in student learning • Accreditation Report • Evidence of student readiness for the next level • Evidence of student growth • Evidence of student success at the next level • Interviews • Vertical Planning SST (Student Services Team) Common Planning (PLC) 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.5	Leadership monitors and communicates comprehensive information about student learning, conditions that support student learning, and the achievement of school improvement goals to stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • School quality control procedures for monitoring information about student learning, conditions that support learning, and the achievement of school improvement goals • Interviews • Leadership meets biweekly to plan communication opportunities with all stakeholders: teachers, students, staff, parents. Leadership meets with each child to discuss taking ownership of their learning, go over assessment results, and the conversation ends with a plan. The plan is of two parts: 1. What the student can do to improve. 2. What the student needs in order to improve. These conversations take place three times a year at a minimum (grades 28). TWC (Teacher's Working Condition Survey) 	3.0

Powerful Practices

Indicator

1. Teachers and Directors consistently use data to identify student learning strengths and weaknesses.

5.2

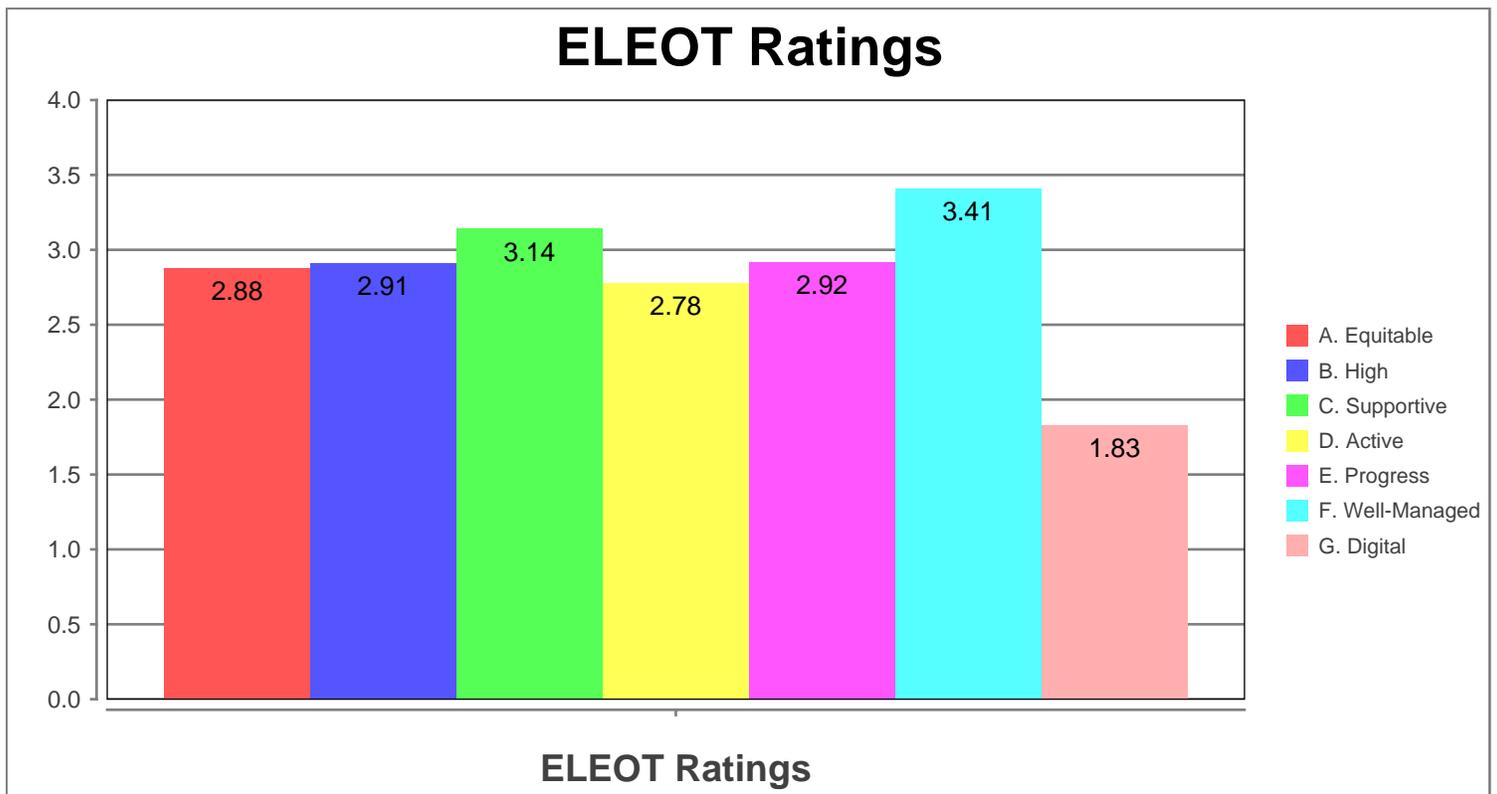
Decisions regarding instruction, support, and remediation are based on several data sources, primarily MAP, EOG, and EOC tests. These data reveal individual student results, which are addressed in the Compass learning program, a computerized system that targets the needs of individual students.

When data are systematically evaluated and the results used to meet individual student needs it creates the organizational conditions necessary to provide student centric instruction.

Learning Environment

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

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



Student Performance

Student Performance on assessments is the second of three primary areas of evaluation for AdvancED's Performance Accreditation model. Institutions are asked to collect and analyze student performance data, then submit the data and the analyses to the External Review Team for review. The External Review Team evaluates the quality of the assessments used by the institution, the degree to which the institution properly administered the assessments, analyzed and acted on the results, and the overall performance of students using a set of rubrics. The scale is from 1 (low performing) to 4 (high performing). Results of that evaluation are reported below.

Student Performance Evaluation	
Evaluative Criteria	Performance Level
Assessment Quality	3.0
Test Administration	3.0
Quality of Learning	3.0
Equity of Learning	2.0

Stakeholder Feedback

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

Institutions are asked to collect and analyze stakeholder feedback data, then submit the data and the analyses to the External Review Team for review. The External Review Team evaluates the quality of the administration of the surveys by institution and the degree to which the institution analyzed and acted on the results. The scale is from 1 (low performing) to 4 (high performing). Results of that evaluation are reported below.

Stakeholder Feedback Evaluation	
Evaluative Criteria	Performance Level
Questionnaire Administration	4.0
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	3.0

Part II: Conclusion

Summary of the External Review

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

Piedmont Community Charter School (PCCS) hosted a 4-person review team on Monday and Tuesday, April 14 & 15, 2014. They have two campuses - one for Grades K-5, the other for Grades 6-12.

The team completed a thorough review of artifacts and documentation, conducted interviews with multiple representative groups of stakeholders, conducted 36 classroom observations utilizing the Effective Learning Environment Observation Tool (ELEOT), and engaged in team deliberations. Interviews were conducted with three administrators, 26 students (12 elementary and 14 secondary), 20 teachers, nine support staff, and 14 parents and board members and three administrators. The team traveled back and forth each day, with two members on each campus.

PCCS was well-prepared for the visit. Their documents were loaded into ASSIST by late February. School personnel were honest in their appraisals of their programs and areas of strength and weakness.

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

The following five themes emerged from our visit:

1. Classrooms were managed with high standards for behavior, and students responded with cooperation and diligence. The character education program complements this aspect of the school. It is evident that students and staff have developed relationships of mutual respect. This contributes to the warm, inviting environment of both campuses.
2. School personnel actively communicate with parents and other stakeholders to ensure that student learning and behavior goals are met. Many practices are currently in place to ensure consistent, appropriate, and timely feedback.
3. PCCS consistently uses data to identify student learning strengths and weaknesses. Those data inform their decisions regarding instruction and support.
4. A Strategic Planning Process involving all stake holders (board members, teachers, administrators, and parents) began in January 2013. It has resulted in a plan which gives PCCS a clear direction. The PCCS strategic plan developed a "Portrait of a Graduate" that guides them as they prepare students to be lifelong learners and successful adults.

5. Teachers, administrators and staff have many opportunities for professional development that are based on the needs of the staff and school community.

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.

The External Review Team utilized the Effective Learning Environment Observation Tool (ELEOT) to observe the learning environment of students in 36 classrooms to evaluate the quality of the learning environment classified around seven constructs of effective learning environments. The scores ranged from a low rating of 1.83 out of 4.00 in Digital Learning Environment to the highest rating of 3.41 in Well Managed Learning Environment. The remaining five Learning Environments were rated as follows in the order of lowest to highest:

Active Learning: 2.78;

Equitable Learning: 2.88;

High Expectations Environment: 2.91;

Progress Monitoring: 2.92;

and Supportive Learning Environment 3.14.

The most consistent theme of the classroom observations was that students are well-behaved, diligent, and cooperative in the classroom. However, classes were often teacher-centered, allowing for little or no student engagement in cooperative, active learning, or higher-order thinking.

We recommend engaging students in more rigorous learning activities that focus on using critical thinking, more applying learning across disciplines, and more use of technology that expands student learning experiences. Classroom need to be more student-centered and provide opportunities for students to be more involved in collaborative, active learning activities that lead to more self-reflection.

We appreciate the work and hospitality of Ms. Purdee, Ms. Friend, and Ms. White. They and their staffs welcomed us and helped make our stay comfortable and our work valuable. It is evident that Piedmont Community Charter School is highly committed to continuous improvement. They did quality work in conducting a thorough self-assessment process and hosting the external review.

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

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

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

IEQ Institutional Score: 310

Teaching and Learning Impact: 310
(Standards 3 and 5; Student Performance Criteria)

Leadership Capacity: 318
(Standards 1 and 2; Stakeholder Engagement Criteria)

Resource Utilization: 300
(Standard 4)

The External Review team recommends that Piedmont Community Charter School be accredited by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission for a five-year term of accreditation.

Required Action

1. Develop, implement, and monitor a plan to provide learning experiences in all classes that are rigorous and student centered.

Related Indicator or Assurance: 3.3

Description:

The ELEOT results reveal the need to ensure rigor and more student-centered learning in the classrooms. In order to develop 21st century learning skills students must be challenged to think critically (i.e., analyze, evaluate, synthesize) about the curricular content; have ample opportunities to apply their learning across disciplines and use technology for learning; be given time to self-reflect on what they learned and how they learned it; and be provided frequent opportunities to collaborate in pairs or small groups in order to be actively, not passively, engaged in their own learning.

When students are consistently engaged in learner-centric learning, it provides them with equitable and challenging learning experiences and sufficient opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for success at the next level.

Part III: Addenda

The External Review Team

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Next Steps

The institution should:

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

Celebrating Accreditation

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

About AdvancED

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

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

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