

# Report of the External Review Team for Ponca High School

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# Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

The External Review is the hallmark of AdvancED Performance Accreditation. It energizes and equips the institution's leadership and stakeholders to achieve higher levels of performance and address those areas that

may be hindering efforts to reach desired performance levels. External Review is a rigorous process that includes the in-depth examination of evidence and relevant data, interviews with all stakeholder groups, and extensive observations of learning, instruction, and operations.

## Use of Diagnostic Tools

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

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

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

## Index of Education Quality

In the past, accreditation reviews resulted in an accreditation recommendation on status. Labels such as advised, warned, probation, or all clear were used to describe the status of a school relative to the AdvancED Standards and other evaluative criteria. Beginning in the 2013-14 school year, AdvancED introduced a new framework to describe the results of an accreditation review. Consistent with the modern focus of accreditation on continuous improvement with an emphasis on student success, AdvancED introduced an innovative and state-of-the-art framework for diagnosing and revealing institutional performance called the Index of Education Quality (IEQ™). The IEQ™ comprises three domains of performance: 1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; 2) the capacity of leadership to guide the institution toward the achievement of its

vision and strategic priorities; and 3) use of resources to support and optimize learning. Therefore, your institution will no longer receive an accreditation status. Instead, your institution will be accredited with an IEQ™ score. In the case where an institution is failing to meet established criteria, the accreditation will be under review thereby requiring frequent monitoring and demonstrated improvement.

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

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

## Benchmark Data

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

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

## Powerful Practices

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

## Opportunities for Improvement

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

## Improvement Priorities

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

## The Review

The External Review was held December 13-15, 2015. The school was well prepared for the review and provided the External Review Team with evidence via a Google site, district website, documents in ASSIST, and on site during the review. The team prepared for the review through emails, phone calls, and review of information provided by the school prior to the review. Team members reviewed the schedule and were assigned an AdvancED standard prior to the review. Planning between the Lead Evaluator, school leadership, evidence review by the team members, and planning by the school's improvement team provided preparation for the review and ensured the review was efficient and provided things necessary for the reviewers to complete their work.

The Ponca schools were able to provide the External Review Team with additional evidence when it was requested. The commitment by the Ponca schools to school improvement was evident and was representative of the school community. The team is appreciative of the generous hospitality extended to them during the review. The team is especially appreciative of the work that went into the preparation for the review and the open conversations that the team was able to have with the various stakeholder groups.

Stakeholders were interviewed by members of the External Review Team to gain their perspectives on topics

relevant to the institution's effectiveness and student performance. The feedback gained through the stakeholder interviews was considered with other evidences and data to support the findings of the External Review. The following chart depicts the numbers of persons interviewed representative of various stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder Interviewed	Number
Superintendents	1
Board Members	5
Administrators	2
Instructional Staff	26
Support Staff	11
Students	74
Parents/Community/Business Leaders	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>

# Results

## Teaching and Learning Impact

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

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

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

Institutions with strong improvement processes move beyond anxiety about the current reality and focus on priorities and initiatives for the future. Using results, i.e., data and other information, to guide continuous improvement is key to an institution's success. A study conducted by Datnow, Park, and Wohlstetter (2007) from the Center on Educational Governance at the University of Southern California indicated that data can shed light on existing areas of strength and weakness and also guide improvement strategies in a systematic and strategic manner (Dembosky, J., Pane, J., Barney, H., & Christina, R., 2005). The study also identified six

key strategies that performance-driven systems use: (1) building a foundation for data-driven decision making, (2) establishing a culture of data use and continuous improvement, (3) investing in an information management system, (4) selecting the right data, (5) building institutional capacity for data-driven decision making, and (6) analyzing and acting on data to improve performance. Other research studies, though largely without comparison groups, suggested that data-driven decision-making has the potential to increase student performance (Alwin, 2002; Doyle, 2003; Lafee, 2002; McIntire, 2002).

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

### Standard 3 - Teaching and Assessing for Learning

The school's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning.

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
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.	2.83	2.81
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.	2.17	2.49
3.3	Teachers engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	2.17	2.60
3.4	School leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	2.33	2.70
3.5	Teachers participate in collaborative learning communities to improve instruction and student learning.	2.67	2.57
3.6	Teachers implement the school's instructional process in support of student learning.	2.17	2.57
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the school's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	1.83	2.54
3.8	The school engages families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keeps them informed of their children's learning progress.	3.00	3.06

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
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.	3.00	2.98
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.	2.00	2.75
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	2.33	2.53
3.12	The school provides and coordinates learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	2.50	2.61

### Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement

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	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
5.1	The school establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	2.67	2.66
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.	2.50	2.37
5.3	Professional and support staff are trained in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.	2.33	2.06
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.	2.00	2.46
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.	2.33	2.71

### Student Performance Diagnostic

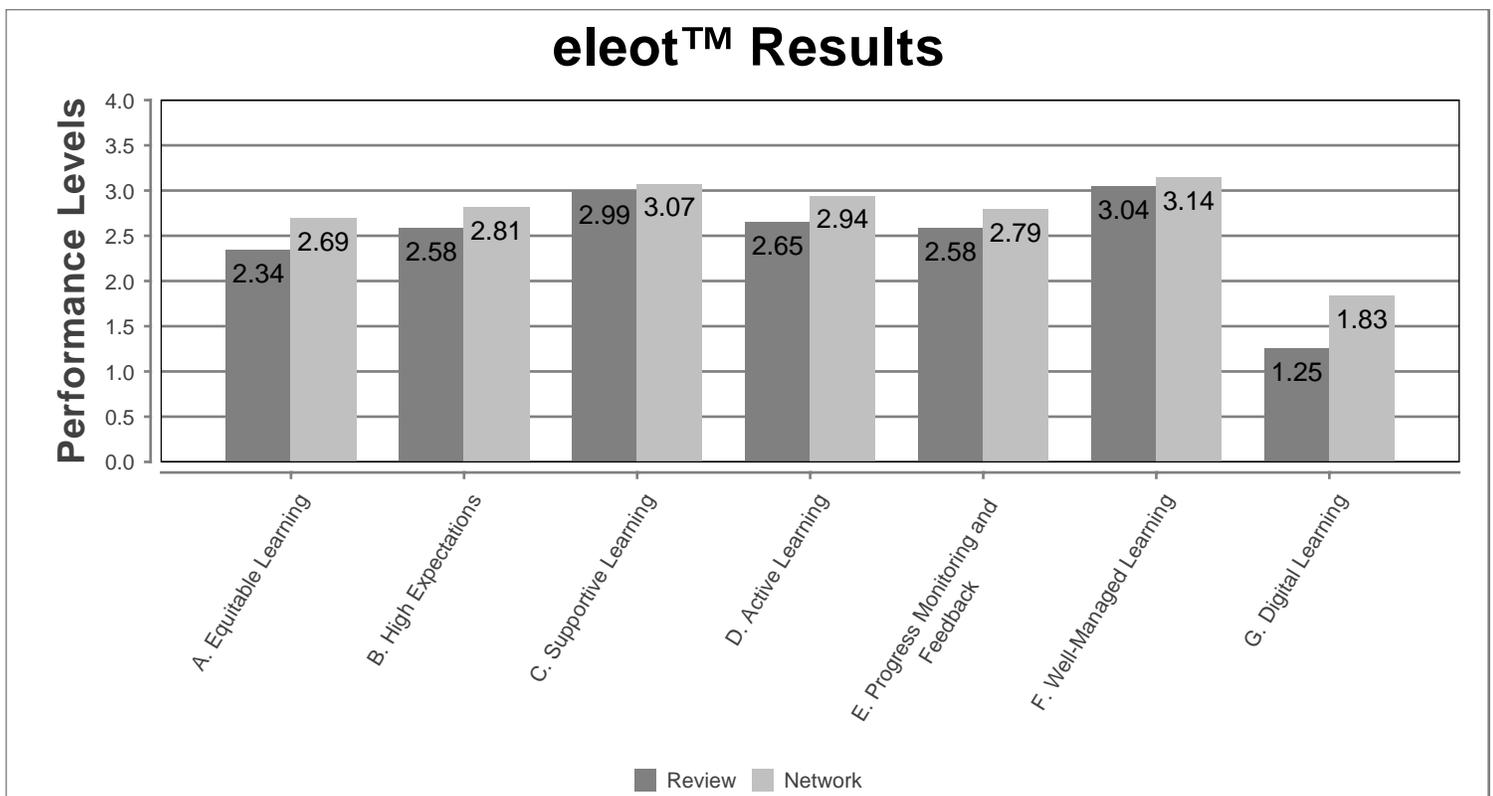
The quality of assessments used to measure student learning, assurance that assessments are administered with procedural fidelity and appropriate accommodations, assessment results that reflect the quality of learning, and closing gaps in achievement among subpopulations of students are all important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

Evaluative Criteria	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
Assessment Quality	2.83	3.06
Test Administration	3.00	3.45
Equity of Learning	2.67	2.70
Quality of Learning	3.00	2.92

## Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™)

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

Observations of classrooms or other learning venues are conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes per observation. Every member of the External Review Team is required to be trained and pass a certification exam that establishes inter-rater reliability. Team members conduct multiple observations during the review process and provide ratings on 30 items based on a four-point scale (4=very evident; 3=evident; 2=somewhat evident; and 1=not observed). The following provides the aggregate average score across multiple observations for each of the seven learning environments included in eleot™ as well as benchmark results across the AdvancED Network.



Sixteen eleot observations were conducted during the course of the External Review which allowed the team to observe nearly all teachers at the middle and high level and a few elementary level classrooms. The Well-Managed Learning Environment (3.04) and Supportive Learning Environment (2.99) were the domains with the highest ratings. These ratings had a strong correlation with the interviews that the team conducted during the review and the evidence provided prior to and during the review. Digital Learning (1.25) was the domain with

the lowest rating. The team recognizes that the Digital Learning Environment is typically the lowest ranking domain throughout the AdvancED Network (AEN).

The average scores of the eleot domains for the Ponca schools were similar to the AdvancED Network for the Ponca schools with the Well Managed and Supportive Learning Environment ranking the highest for both, and the Digital Learning Environments was the lowest for both. All stakeholder groups expressed concern over improving technology usage and integration in the school. They also indicated that students experience a safe and supportive environment and that they had access to opportunities that prepared them for experiences after high school. The team observed that positive student behaviors and attitudes were established and maintained. This correlates with the Supportive Learning Environment domain.

Overall, the eleot observations were positive with Ponca's rankings being similar to the AdvancED Network. The team recognizes that a 20-minute snapshot of classrooms during a single period on one day is not always reflective of a typical day. Student, teacher, and stakeholder interviews suggest that students are part of a supportive classroom and school experience.

**eleot™ Data Summary**

A. Equitable Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	1.69	Has differentiated learning opportunities and activities that meet her/his needs	6.25%	18.75%	12.50%	62.50%
2.	2.88	Has equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	31.25%	31.25%	31.25%	6.25%
3.	3.19	Knows that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied	31.25%	56.25%	12.50%	0.00%
4.	1.62	Has ongoing opportunities to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/differences	6.25%	18.75%	6.25%	68.75%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.34</b>						

B. High Expectations			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.00	Knows and strives to meet the high expectations established by the teacher	25.00%	50.00%	25.00%	0.00%
2.	2.81	Is tasked with activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	25.00%	50.00%	6.25%	18.75%
3.	1.56	Is provided exemplars of high quality work	6.25%	12.50%	12.50%	68.75%
4.	3.12	Is engaged in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks	37.50%	43.75%	12.50%	6.25%
5.	2.38	Is asked and responds to questions that require higher order thinking (e.g., applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	6.25%	56.25%	6.25%	31.25%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.58</b>						

C. Supportive Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.38	Demonstrates or expresses that learning experiences are positive	50.00%	37.50%	12.50%	0.00%
2.	3.31	Demonstrates positive attitude about the classroom and learning	37.50%	56.25%	6.25%	0.00%
3.	2.38	Takes risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	18.75%	37.50%	6.25%	37.50%
4.	3.38	Is provided support and assistance to understand content and accomplish tasks	50.00%	37.50%	12.50%	0.00%
5.	2.50	Is provided additional/alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level of challenge for her/his needs	18.75%	37.50%	18.75%	25.00%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.99</b>						

D. Active Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	2.81	Has several opportunities to engage in discussions with teacher and other students	6.25%	75.00%	12.50%	6.25%
2.	2.00	Makes connections from content to real-life experiences	12.50%	18.75%	25.00%	43.75%
3.	3.12	Is actively engaged in the learning activities	50.00%	18.75%	25.00%	6.25%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.65</b>						

<b>E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback</b>			<b>%</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Very Evident</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Somewhat Evident</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
1.	2.62	Is asked and/or quizzed about individual progress/learning	43.75%	12.50%	6.25%	37.50%
2.	2.94	Responds to teacher feedback to improve understanding	37.50%	37.50%	6.25%	18.75%
3.	3.00	Demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of the lesson/content	18.75%	62.50%	18.75%	0.00%
4.	2.00	Understands how her/his work is assessed	12.50%	25.00%	12.50%	50.00%
5.	2.31	Has opportunities to revise/improve work based on feedback	25.00%	25.00%	6.25%	43.75%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 2.58</b>						

<b>F. Well-Managed Learning</b>			<b>%</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Very Evident</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Somewhat Evident</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
1.	3.56	Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers	62.50%	31.25%	6.25%	0.00%
2.	3.69	Follows classroom rules and works well with others	68.75%	31.25%	0.00%	0.00%
3.	2.88	Transitions smoothly and efficiently to activities	31.25%	43.75%	6.25%	18.75%
4.	1.62	Collaborates with other students during student-centered activities	6.25%	12.50%	18.75%	62.50%
5.	3.44	Knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences	43.75%	56.25%	0.00%	0.00%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.04</b>						

G. Digital Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	1.38	Uses digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	0.00%	12.50%	12.50%	75.00%
2.	1.19	Uses digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	0.00%	0.00%	18.75%	81.25%
3.	1.19	Uses digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning	0.00%	0.00%	18.75%	81.25%
<b>Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 1.25</b>						

## Findings

### Improvement Priority

Prepare and distribute a comprehensive written report to stakeholders that includes student academic performance data, school system demographics, school improvement goals, and school system financial information.

(Indicator 5.5)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 5.5

#### Evidence and Rationale

The school has implemented a comprehensive assessment system to measure academic achievement in the core areas of Reading, Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science. The assessment system is comprised of multiple assessment tools, including NWEA Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) Tests, Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) Assessments, and the ACT Test. During the 2014-2015 school year, students in grades K-11 took part in MAP Testing, students in grades 3-8 and 11 participated in NeSA Assessments, and 68% of 12th grade students completed the ACT test.

The school has developed a systematic process for collecting, analyzing, and sharing data compiled from a variety of data sources. The school has utilized a data team comprised of cross-curricular and grade-level teachers to collect and organize the the student achievement data derived from MAP Tests, NeSA Assessments, and the ACT. Data is organized in charts and graphs depicting trend and comparison data; however, the disaggregation of data according to demographic characteristics was not evident. Further disaggregation of the data may provide the school with additional insights related to student achievement differences across different demographic groups.

Opportunities to review and analyze data are provided during annual professional development days and through monthly professional learning communities (PLC). Teachers participate in discussions and grade-level conversations to evaluate the data.

The school communicates student achievement data and school improvement related data via the district website and link to the State of the School Report. Parents and patrons reported that some data is also provided to the public through the monthly school newsletter; however, the school does not prepare and distribute a comprehensive annual written report detailing student performance data at this time.

### **Improvement Priority**

Research, adopt, and implement an instructional model and/or framework that incorporates routine components and is reflected within the evaluation of staff members.

(Indicator 2.6, Indicator 3.2, Indicator 3.4, Indicator 3.5)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.2

#### Evidence and Rationale

Interviews and artifacts revealed that Ponca Public Schools began implementation of the Build Your Own Curriculum (BYOC) program with assistance from Educational Service Unit #1. Teachers began mapping their reading and math curriculum, following up with science and social studies. Time was set-aside for the end of 2015-2016 to follow up and update the changing English Language Arts standards of Nebraska to match BYOC. The curriculum review and revision process continues to be a work in progress.

The consistency of curriculum focuses around the textbooks used for each core subject area: Treasures Reading, Saxon Math, Science Fusion, McGraw-Hill Networks, and Pearson-Prentice Hall Literature. The use of assessments is based upon these textbooks and the assessments embedded within. The curriculum review cycle is typically a 6-7 year rotation. Various teams preview, observe, and collaborate to decide best resources to accommodate district goals and practices.

Interventions in place at this time involve the MTSS (Multi-Tier System Supports) through the Educational Service Unit. A similar program to SAT (Student Assistance Team) or RtI (Response to Intervention), Ponca Public Schools has a trained team that is a part of this process. At this point, they use MAP data as their screener to determine interventions for students, but will likely adopt AimsWeb or a similar assessment tool to progress monitor at-risk or low students. From there, the goal is to build in an intervention block. MAPS data is reviewed by staff with the intention to locate trends or gaps in instruction. APL strategies seem to be the classroom management tool used district wide. The teacher evaluation tool does not seem to be reflective of this expectation. APL strategies were not evident in every classroom. Objectives were consistently posted in each classroom.

Professional Learning Communities were recently adopted across the Ponca school district. Two forms of

PLCs were described in the interview process with staff, (1) whole staff and (2) cooperating/grade level teaching partners. As a whole group, inconsistencies from month to month surfaced. From data collection to reading articles, follow through or direction was not clear to staff members. There is limited documentation of the PLC process within each meeting at this point.

Ponca schools have many promising practices in place and would benefit from building a more defined structure, such as an instructional model or framework, that would assist them in focusing their efforts with curriculum review and revision, staff development, mentoring and teacher support.

### **Opportunity For Improvement**

Define the purpose and direction of existing collaborative teams to assist with teacher support, mentoring, common grading practices, and professional development.

(Indicator 3.7, Indicator 3.10, Indicator 3.11)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.11

#### Evidence and Rationale

It was reported that professional learning teams are in place across the Ponca school. It was unclear and reports were inconsistent as to what the purpose and intended outcome of the teams' work should be. The school is supportive of these efforts with early release time and sometimes common planning time being available for staff; however, a more defined and focused understanding of their purpose would provide clarity and improve the relationship and benefit to school improvement efforts.

# Leadership Capacity

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

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

AdvancED has found through its evaluation of best practices in more than 32,000 institutions around the world that a successful institution commits to a shared purpose and direction and establishes expectations for student learning that are aligned with the institutions' vision and supported by internal and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and overall institution effectiveness.

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

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

## Standard 1 - Purpose and Direction

The 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	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
1.1	The school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	2.50	2.73
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.	2.50	2.96
1.3	The school's leadership implements a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	2.00	2.56

## Standard 2 - Governance and Leadership

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the school.	2.83	2.96
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	3.00	2.91
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.	3.00	3.15
2.4	Leadership and staff foster a culture consistent with the school's purpose and direction.	2.83	3.09
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the school's purpose and direction.	2.50	2.79
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice and student success.	2.00	2.74

## Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic

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

Institutions are asked to collect and analyze stakeholder feedback data, then submit the data and the analyses to the External Review Team for review. The External Review Team evaluates the quality of the administration of the surveys by institution, survey results, and the degree to which the institution analyzed and acted on the results.

Evaluative Criteria	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
Questionnaire Administration	3.83	3.35
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	3.17	3.04

## Findings

### Opportunity For Improvement

Review and update the mission statement and evaluation processes to develop a more complete process to support the positive strides in school improvement that the district has made.

(Indicator 2.6)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 2.6

#### Evidence and Rationale

According to evidence provided, the school district has leaders who are advocates for the system's vision and improvement efforts. Leaders encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for system and school improvement among stakeholders. The district's policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation. While various processes and conditions to improve learning are being implemented, the implementation is not consistent across the district, and the results appear to be varied. Through interviews and artifacts it is apparent that supervision and evaluation processes are implemented at minimal levels and that leaders sometimes communicate effectively with stakeholder groups. In addition, there is evidence that the school leaders and staff expect all students to be held to high standards in all curricular areas. Periodic review of the mission statement as the overarching statement of how the schools define themselves would be helpful as they move forward.

### Powerful Practice

Evidence is readily apparent that Ponca Public School has a strong, positive culture with strong community involvement and commitment to the school.

(Indicator 1.2)

Primary Indicator

## Indicator 1.2

Evidence and Rationale

Through interviews with all stakeholder groups, it is evident that Ponca Public Schools has a positive culture with a strong sense of shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning. Survey results and interviews show that there is a very strong relationship between the community and the district and the community is very supportive of school activities, its students, and their education. A school foundation supports the school in various efforts, and staff is readily available to assist students and help them meet their needs.

# Resource Utilization

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

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

AdvancED has found through its own evaluation of best practices in the more than 32,000 institutions in the AdvancED Network that a successful institution has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, meets special needs, and complies with applicable regulations. The institution employs and allocates staff members who are well qualified for their assignments. The institution provides a safe learning environment for students and staff. The institution provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff members to improve their effectiveness and ensures compliance with applicable governmental regulations.

## Standard 4 - Resources and Support Systems

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
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.	2.83	2.95
4.2	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the school.	3.00	2.96
4.3	The school maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	3.17	3.11
4.4	Students and school personnel use a range of media and information resources to support the school's educational programs.	2.67	2.78
4.5	The technology infrastructure supports the school's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	1.50	2.52

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.6	The school provides support services to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	2.83	2.81
4.7	The school provides services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.	2.83	2.75

## Findings

### Improvement Priority

Develop a plan for technology equipment rotation, implementation, and integration including staff development and policies and procedures relating to technology integration to improve and support instructional practice.

(Indicator 4.4, Indicator 4.5)

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 4.5

#### Evidence and Rationale

All stakeholders groups indicated improvement of technology resources as a need. Specifically, some teachers stated that the computers were outdated, with some as old as ten years. Minimal technology resources were observed in classrooms with the exception of the smart board used for note-taking and to display videos. The question was posed in an interview session as to how teachers would use technology. Some were able to provide examples of how laptops could be used for research and interventions. Student interviews suggested students would use one-to-one laptops to take notes easier and participate in online quizzes and research. Staff development and review of policies and procedures relating to technology implementation and integration were also observed as potential areas in need of improvement.

### Powerful Practice

Programs to support students emotional and social needs are apparent and well known to stakeholders.

(Indicator 3.9, Indicator 4.6, Indicator 4.7, Indicator 5.1, SP1. Assessment Quality )

#### Primary Indicator

Indicator 4.6

#### Evidence and Rationale

Ponca School has committed to developing students of character through the implementation of the "Olweus Bully Prevention Program." This is done through implementation and support of various programs K-12. All students PK-12 meet in character groups twice a month for a lesson on what it means to be people of great character. Components of this program include their "Check and Connect" and the advisory board structure where students 7-12 stay together in groups through their school career, and time is allowed regularly during the school day to support these activities.



# Conclusion

Ponca Public Schools has a very collaborative and supportive culture that extends beyond the school to include the community. Students are supported through programs that ensure all students are supported in many ways such as college planning and programs that ensure all students are known well by at least one appropriate adult in the school setting. Examples of coordination of efforts between the school and community were many, and it was evident that this has been and continues to be a long standing tradition. The school has grown much in formalizing their school improvement process and is eager and willing to do the work of school improvement. Ponca schools are strongly encouraged to research and adopt an instructional model/framework that will help them further focus their efforts, in particular in the areas of curriculum review, staff development, and teacher support.

The school communicates with the community in a variety of ways including local news outlets and a district website. The school is encouraged to develop a comprehensive written report that includes student demographic and academic performance data, school improvement goals and progress, and school system financial information. The area of technology surfaced as an area of concern for stakeholders. The school is also strongly encouraged to develop a plan to work with the concerns expressed through a systematic process.

The identified improvement priority of adopting and implementation of an instructional framework will help the school further define how to proceed with existing programs in a more focused way. This will support and in time, help direct the school improvement process and the decisions made in that process. Most importantly, it will provide the school with a framework and focus for things such as professional development and curriculum review that influence student achievement. Development of a plan for technology equipment rotation, implementation, and integration will help the school plan for the future.

## Improvement Priorities

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

- Develop a plan for technology equipment rotation, implementation, and integration including staff development and policies and procedures relating to technology integration to improve and support instructional practice.
- Prepare and distribute a comprehensive written report to stakeholders that includes student academic performance data, school system demographics, school improvement goals, and school system financial information.
- Research, adopt, and implement an instructional model and/or framework that incorporates routine components and is reflected within the evaluation of staff members.

# Accreditation Recommendation

## Index of Education Quality

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

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

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

	External Review IEQ Score	AdvancED Network Average
Overall Score	259.83	278.34
Teaching and Learning Impact	249.21	268.94
Leadership Capacity	274.24	292.64
Resource Utilization	269.05	283.23

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

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

# Addenda

## Team Roster

Member	Brief Biography
Dr. Jamie S Isom	<p>Dr. Jamie Isom is currently the superintendent of Valentine Community Schools in Valentine Nebraska, a district with an enrollment of approximately 640 students spanning over 3,000 square miles. Through her 30 years in education with the last 23 in the Valentine district, Dr. Isom has served in various roles including teacher, library media specialist, and most recently 14 years as superintendent. She has experienced district consolidation and budget shortfalls, and believes that the school improvement process is a powerful process in meeting the many challenges a district may face.</p>
Jeff Wiles	<p>Mr. Jeff Wiles became the principal of Plattsmouth High School in June of 2005. Wiles previously served as the school's activities director and social science teacher. He returned to Plattsmouth High School after graduating from the University of Nebraska/Lincoln in August 1985 as a social science teacher and coach. In 1999 he became the school's activities director.</p> <p>Wiles brings a broad spectrum of experience to the Principal's post. As a social science teacher, coach, student council adviser, and activities director. Wiles has also served on the Plattsmouth Park Board, was the executive director for the Nebraska Association of student councils, and served on the Nebraska Coaches Association advisory board for track &amp; field.</p> <p>As a principal Wiles has lead several school initiatives. He was instrumental in the ninth grade transition program, bringing in the high school of business, formulation and implementation of the tutorial period, the development of a pyramid of interventions, advancing Plattsmouth High School to being the first silver level high school in the national healthy schools program, the addition of the dual credit program and the UNL honor's program, facilities upgrades, the learning initiative, and free ACT preparation classes. In addition, Wiles has done accreditation visits to Blair, Loup City, and Yutan.</p>
Dr. Dennis McGuire	<p>Dennis is currently in his eighth year working as a Management Consultant in Accreditation and School Improvement at the Nebraska Department of Education. He holds a bachelor's degree from St. Benedict's College, two masters' degrees from the University of Nebraska and Kansas State University respectively, and a doctorate from Kansas State University. His professional experience spans over 45 years serving as a secondary and college instructor and administrator. He has been published by the National Council of Teachers of English and the Kansas Association of Teachers of English. He has served as team member and chair on numerous accreditation reviews in Nebraska as well as Kansas, Wyoming, and South Dakota.</p>

Member	Brief Biography
Megan Nixon	<p>Megan Nixon is currently a 4th grade reading and 4th-6th grade writing teacher at Pender Public Schools. This is Megan’s first year at Pender Public Schools. Prior to the 2015-2016 school year, Megan was the 4th grade teacher at Wakefield Community Schools for 10 years. She also spent the last six years in Wakefield specializing in writing instruction for 4th-6th grade students. Megan started her teaching career with Lincoln Public Schools at Hartley Elementary teaching 5th grade.</p> <p>In addition to teaching, Megan also coached volleyball and basketball for several years. She was the head volleyball, assistant girls’ basketball, and junior high volleyball coach at Wakefield. Megan also coached girls’ basketball at Lincoln Northeast High School. She was the head freshman coach and assistant varsity coach.</p> <p>Megan Nixon earned her bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education and Coaching Endorsement from the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. Her master’s degree was obtained from Peru State College in Curriculum and Assessment.</p> <p>Aside from teaching, Megan has had the opportunity to work closely with the Nebraska Department of Education on the 4th grade Writing Assessment. She was invited to participate in the State Prompt Writing Workshop for the last two years. Megan also served as a team member for the State Rubric and Range-finding Team in connection to the 4th grade writing assessment. In addition, she collaborated with NDE and other 4th grade teachers to share writing instructional strategies with other teachers across the state.</p> <p>While teaching at Wakefield Community Schools, Megan was a part of the AdvancED process as a staff member. She worked with her colleagues in the area of Teaching and Assessing Learning.</p>
Ms. Liesel Powicki	<p>Liesel Powicki is in her fourth year as an instructor in the School of Education at Wayne State College. She is a PhD candidate in the field of Reading, Language, and Literacy through Concordia University-Chicago with a special interest in literacy instruction and assessment. Liesel teaches the Literacy classes and Clinical Experience for students at the end of their undergraduate program as well as the Reading Specialist courses in the graduate program. Before working at Wayne State College, she had a brief opportunity to work as a Literacy Coach for the Mankato School District in Minnesota and as an Rtl Coordinator and Reading Intervention Teacher in Minnesota as well. Liesel began her teaching career as a 4th grade and 1st grade classroom teacher in Iowa.</p>
Sarah Rusk	<p>I began my career in Education with Wakefield Community School in May of 2006. My main responsibility is the Technology Coordinator, but I also teach a freshman Introduction to Computer Information Technology class. I have also coached junior high track, junior high volleyball, and have been the assistant high school volleyball coach. I received a Bachelor of Science in Business Management from Bellevue University, a Bachelor of Science in Business Education from Wayne State College, and a Master of Arts in 7-12 Educational Administration from the University of Nebraska-Kearney.</p>
Mr. Christopher Uttecht	<p>Christopher Uttecht has served as the Secondary Principal at Wisner-Pilger Jr.-Sr. High School since the 2001-2002 school year. Mr. Uttecht received a Bachelor of Science in Education from the University of Nebraska at Kearney in 1999 with certifications in the areas of Earth Science, Physical Science, Chemistry, and Physics. In 2002, Mr. Uttecht a Master of Science in Education from Wayne State College with certification in Secondary School Administration and Leadership. Prior to serving as Principal, Mr. Uttecht taught Physics, Chemistry, and Physical Science at Wisner-Pilger Jr.-Sr. High School.</p>

## Next Steps

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

## About AdvancED

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

In 2006, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), both founded in 1895, and the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) came together to form AdvancED: one strong, unified organization dedicated to education quality. In 2011, the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC) that was founded in 1917 became part of AdvancED.

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

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