



## **External Review**

**Irwin County High School**

**Irwin County Schools**

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## **Introduction to the External Review Process**

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

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

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

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

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

## **Findings**

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

### **Accreditation Standards and Indicators**

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

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

**Standard 1: Purpose and Direction**

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

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

Standard		Standard Performance Level	
The school maintains and communicates a purpose and direction that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.		2.33	
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"> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> <li>•Survey results</li> <li>•Examples of communications to stakeholders about the school's purpose (i.e. website, newsletters, annual report, student handbook)</li> <li>•Observations</li> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•Purpose statements - past and present</li> </ul>	2
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"> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•Observations</li> <li>•Survey results</li> <li>•The school's statement of purpose</li> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> </ul>	3

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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"><li>•Observations</li><li>•Survey results</li><li>•The school data profile</li><li>•Agenda, minutes from continuous improvement planning meetings</li><li>•Interviews</li><li>•Accreditation Report</li><li>•The school continuous improvement plan</li></ul>	2

### ***Opportunities for Improvement***

### ***Indicator***

1. Design, implement, and communicate a unique vision/mission for Irwin County High School with documented collaboration from all stakeholders. Interviews and artifacts confirmed a limited knowledge of the school's mission and vision.

1.1

The current school's mission statement was developed approximately eight years ago and is printed in handbooks and on classroom posters. The current principal and leadership team have implemented "Irwin C.A.R.E.S." (Commitment, Accountability, Respect, Expectations, and Support) These positive assurances to students are known by the stakeholders, but little input to the development of these concepts was evident.

Having stakeholder involvement in the development of the school's mission and vision creates ownership of the school and contributes to a positive school climate and culture.

**Standard 2: Governance and Leadership**

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

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

Standard		Standard Performance Level	
The school operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and school effectiveness.		2.83	
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"> <li>•Observations</li> <li>•Student handbooks</li> <li>•Governing body policies, procedures, and practices</li> <li>•Staff handbooks</li> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•School handbooks</li> </ul>	3

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Communication plan to inform all staff on code of ethics, responsibilities, conflict of interest</li> <li>•Proof of legal counsel</li> <li>•List of assigned staff for compliance</li> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•Observations</li> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> <li>•Governing body minutes relating to training</li> <li>•Assurances, certifications</li> <li>•Governing body training plan</li> <li>•Findings of internal and external reviews of compliance with laws, regulations, and policies</li> <li>•Communications about program regulations</li> <li>•Governing body policies on roles and responsibilities, conflict of interest</li> <li>•Governing code of ethics</li> </ul>	3
2.3	The governing body ensures that the school leadership has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Roles and responsibilities of school leadership</li> <li>•School improvement plan developed by the school</li> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> <li>•Stakeholder input and feedback</li> <li>•Maintenance of consistent academic oversight, planning, and resource allocation</li> <li>•Survey results regarding functions of the governing body</li> <li>•Observations</li> <li>•Agendas and minutes of meetings</li> <li>•Interviews</li> </ul>	2

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.4	Leadership and staff foster a culture consistent with the school's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Examples of collaboration and shared leadership</li><li>•Survey results</li><li>•Observations</li><li>•Interviews</li><li>•Examples of decisions aligned with the school's statement of purpose</li><li>•Accreditation Report</li><li>•Examples of decisions in support of the school's continuous improvement plan</li></ul>	3
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the school's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Copies of surveys or screen shots from online surveys</li><li>•Survey responses</li><li>•Communication plan</li><li>•Accreditation Report</li><li>•Observations</li><li>•Interviews</li></ul>	3
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice and student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Accreditation Report</li><li>•Examples of professional development offerings and plans tied specifically to the results from supervision and evaluation</li><li>•Governing body policy on supervision and evaluation</li><li>•Supervision and evaluation documents with criteria for improving professional practice and student success noted</li><li>•Observations</li><li>•Job specific criteria</li><li>•Representative supervision and evaluation reports</li><li>•Interviews</li></ul>	3

**Standard 3: Teaching and Assessing for Learning**

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

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

Standard	Standard Performance Level
The school's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning.	2.33

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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"> <li>•Survey results</li> <li>•Lesson plans</li> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> <li>•Learning expectations for different courses</li> <li>•Posted learning objectives</li> <li>•Course schedules</li> <li>•Enrollment patterns for various courses</li> <li>•Course descriptions</li> <li>•Observations</li> </ul>	3
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"> <li>•Curriculum guides</li> <li>•Observations</li> <li>•Common assessments</li> <li>•Surveys results</li> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> <li>•Products – scope and sequence, curriculum maps</li> <li>•Lesson plans aligned to the curriculum</li> </ul>	2
3.3	Teachers engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teacher evaluation criteria</li> <li>•Authentic assessments</li> <li>•Examples of teacher use of technology as an instructional resource</li> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•Observations</li> <li>•Examples of student use of technology as a learning tool</li> <li>•Student work demonstrating the application of knowledge</li> <li>•Findings from supervisor walk-thrus and observations</li> <li>•Surveys results</li> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> </ul>	2

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.4	School leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Curriculum maps</li><li>•Documentation of collection of lesson plans and grade books</li><li>•Supervision and evaluation procedures</li><li>•Peer or mentoring opportunities and interactions</li><li>•Observations</li><li>•Surveys results</li><li>•Interviews</li><li>•Administrative classroom observation protocols and logs</li><li>•Accreditation Report</li></ul>	2
3.5	Teachers participate in collaborative learning communities to improve instruction and student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Accreditation Report</li><li>•Survey results</li><li>•Observations</li><li>•Interviews</li></ul>	1
3.6	Teachers implement the school's instructional process in support of student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Observations</li><li>•Interviews</li><li>•Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance</li><li>•Accreditation Report</li><li>•Survey results</li><li>•Examples of assessments that prompted modification in instruction</li></ul>	3
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"><li>•Accreditation Report</li><li>•Observations</li><li>•Survey results</li><li>•Personnel manuals with information related to new hires including mentoring, coaching, and induction practices</li><li>•Interviews</li></ul>	1

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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"> <li>•Observations</li> <li>•Survey results</li> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•List of varied activities and communications modes with families, e.g., info portal, online, newsletters, parent centers, academic nights, open house, early release days</li> <li>•Calendar outlining when and how families are provided information on child's progress</li> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> </ul>	3
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"> <li>•List of students matched to adult advocate</li> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> <li>•Survey results</li> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•Observations</li> <li>•Master schedule with time for formal adult advocate structure</li> </ul>	3
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"> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> <li>•Observations</li> <li>•Evaluation process for grading and reporting practices</li> <li>•Survey results</li> <li>•Sample report cards for each grade level and for all courses</li> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•Sample communications to stakeholders about grading and reporting</li> <li>•Policies, processes, and procedures on grading and reporting</li> </ul>	3
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•Survey results</li> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> <li>•Observations</li> </ul>	2

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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"><li>•Observations</li><li>•Interviews</li><li>•Survey results</li><li>•List of learning support services and student population served by such services</li><li>•Accreditation Report</li><li>•Data used to identify unique learning needs of students</li></ul>	3

### ***Opportunities for Improvement***

### ***Indicator***

1. Identify and serve high achieving students appropriately.

3.2

From teacher interviews, classroom observation, and class schedule examination, the External Review Team found that placement of high achieving students did not necessarily correlate with available data. Students should be served according to their academic strengths. In order to provide for successful achievement of standards, students should be appropriately placed according to their individual achievement data.

Students achieve their maximum potential when they are appropriately placed in an educational environment.

2. Implement research-based effective instructional strategies that include differentiation for student learning.

3.3

Classroom observations gave ample evidence to conclude that little instructional differentiation is taking place in classrooms and varied instructional strategies are not being utilized. While some teachers were outstanding in providing varied instructional strategies and engaging practices, others were not. Very little differentiation was observed in classrooms. Differentiation of instruction is key to student achievement, as students rarely learn in the same way or at the same time.

The use of research-based instructional strategies will greatly enhance opportunities for student achievement.

**Standard 4: Resources and Support Systems**

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

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

Standard		Standard Performance Level	
The school has resources and provides services that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.		3.0	
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"> <li>•Observations</li> <li>•Survey results</li> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement and retention of professional and support staff</li> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> <li>•Assessments of staffing needs</li> <li>•Documentation of highly qualified staff</li> <li>•School budget for 2012-2013</li> </ul>	3

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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"> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> <li>•Examples of efforts of school leaders to secure necessary material and fiscal resources</li> <li>•Survey results</li> <li>•School schedule</li> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•Alignment of budget with school purpose and direction</li> <li>•Observations</li> <li>•School calendar</li> </ul>	3
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"> <li>•Records of depreciation of equipment</li> <li>•Observations</li> <li>•Survey results</li> <li>•Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements</li> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> <li>•Documentation of emergency procedures such as fire drills, evacuation and other emergency procedures.</li> <li>•System for maintenance requests</li> <li>•Maintenance schedules</li> <li>•Crisis management plan</li> </ul>	3
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"> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•Budget related to media and information resource acquisition</li> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> <li>•Survey results</li> <li>•Observations</li> <li>•Data on media and information resources available to students and staff</li> <li>•Schedule of staff availability to assist students and school personnel related to finding and retrieving information</li> </ul>	3

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.5	The technology infrastructure supports the school's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Technology plan and budget to improve technology services and infrastructure</li> <li>•Assessments to inform development of technology plan</li> <li>•Survey results</li> <li>•Policies relative to technology use</li> <li>•BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) Procedure</li> </ul>	3
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"> <li>•Student assessment system for identifying student needs</li> <li>•Survey results</li> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•Social classes and services, e.g., bullying, character education</li> <li>•List of support services available to students</li> <li>•Observations</li> <li>•List of community support services available to students/families</li> </ul>	3
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"> <li>•List of services available related to counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning</li> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> <li>•Survey results</li> <li>•Budget for counseling, assessment, referral, educational and career planning</li> <li>•Description of IEP process</li> <li>•Description of referral process</li> </ul>	3

**Powerful Practices**

**Indicator**

1. The use of personal technology has greatly enhanced opportunities for immediate application and research.

4.5

Students are able to use personal technology (BYOD - Bring Your Own Device) to immediately make real world application of classroom instruction. Handling their own personal devices maximized instructional time and enriched the engagement of students. During classroom observations by the External Review Team, students were observed operating their own devices in effective and meaningful ways to enhance learning. This valuable utilization of student devices has expanded the application of technology and added resources to the classroom. These technology experiences easily transfer to the daily life of modern youth.

Allowing students to utilize twenty-first century technology prepares them for real world experiences and success in their future endeavors.

**Standard 5: Using Results for Continuous Improvement**

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

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

Standard		Standard Performance Level	
The school implements a comprehensive assessment system that generates a range of data about student learning and school effectiveness and uses the results to guide continuous improvement.		2.2	
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"> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> <li>•Documentation or description of evaluation tools/protocols</li> <li>•Observations</li> <li>•Survey results</li> <li>•Interviews</li> </ul>	2

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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"><li>•Survey results</li><li>•Interviews</li><li>•Examples of use of data to design, implement, and evaluate continuous improvement plans and apply learning</li><li>•Observations</li><li>•Accreditation Report</li></ul>	2
5.3	Professional and support staff are trained in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Interviews</li><li>•Survey results</li><li>•Observations</li><li>•Accreditation Report</li></ul>	1
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"><li>•Student surveys</li><li>•Accreditation Report</li><li>•Evidence of student readiness for the next level</li><li>•Evidence of student growth</li><li>•Observations</li><li>•Evidence of student success at the next level</li><li>•Interviews</li></ul>	3
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"><li>•Observations</li><li>•Communication plan regarding student learning, conditions that support learning, and achievement of school improvement goals to stakeholders</li><li>•Survey results</li><li>•Sample communications to stakeholders regarding student learning, conditions that support learning, and achievement of school improvement goals</li><li>•Accreditation Report</li><li>•Interviews</li></ul>	3

## Learning Environment

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

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

### ELEOT

<b><i>Environments</i></b>	<b><i>Level</i></b>
A. Equitable Learning Environment	2.45
B. High Expectations Environment	2.25
C. Supportive Learning Environment	2.71
D. Active Learning Environment	2.84
E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment	2.38
F. Well-Managed Learning Environment	2.9
G. Digital Learning Environment	2.07

## 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.

The AdvancED external review for Irwin County High School was conducted over a three-day period, April 16-18, 2013, in conjunction with a Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards (GAPSS) Analysis done by the Georgia Department of Education. The school was well-prepared for the review and transparent in its self-assessment. Classroom observations were done throughout the first day and in the morning of the second day. Interviews were conducted on both the first and second day.

The External Review Team interviewed approximately forty-eight stakeholders comprised of students, teachers, administrators, and parents. The team completed twenty-three classroom visits using the Effective Learning Environment Observational Tool. Both core academic and elective classes were observed. Numerous artifacts were examined and reviewed and additional artifacts were provided upon request.

The External Review Team was welcomed and accommodated throughout the visit. Classrooms were accessible as scheduled and provided team members with valuable and varied observational experiences. Artifacts were well-organized and readily available throughout the review.

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.

Irwin County High School provided documentation of adherence to AdvancED standards and compliance with local, state, and federal laws. While the school ranked itself as either a one or a two on thirty of the thirty-three indicators, the External Review Team found sufficient evidence to score many of those indicators at a higher level on the AdvancED rubric. There were other indicators on which the team concurred with the school's self-assessment. The team also found school staff members eager for input and feedback to improve their school.

Classroom observations provided abundant examples of student use of technology. The school's policy of BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) has fostered an environment where students are able to quickly access digital information relevant to class studies. This creative use of resources has maximized opportunities for the students of this rural school.

Respect for and admiration of the school's leadership was apparent throughout the visit. Students, parents, and staff echoed the caring atmosphere that is pervasive at Irwin County High School. It was obvious through many sources that students felt safe and accepted in the school. Parents expressed that they felt welcomed, appreciated, and valued. The principal provides strong leadership in creating a culture of respect and dignity throughout the school.

It would be beneficial for the school to revisit its mission and vision statements and include a wide array of stakeholders. Allowing all stakeholders to take an active part in creating and adopting the school's mission and vision will create an even greater depth of ownership of the school and its place within the larger community. Several parents expressed a desire to participate in this process and willingly offered their services to the school.

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.

Classroom observations made by the External Review Team revealed many positive characteristics of an excellent school. Each classroom is taught by a highly qualified teacher as designated by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Teachers have established a safe, caring, and well-managed learning environment. Students are knowledgeable of routines and procedures, and there is a sense of order and productivity throughout the school.

Excellent examples of hands-on learning were observed in many of the CTAE (Career, Technical and Agricultural Education) classrooms. Students were actively engaged in the classes and instruction was meaningful and relevant to real-world applications. Students were able to articulate not only the standards on which they were working, but why the learning was important, and how the learning was useful in a chosen career.

The External Review Team noted whole-group, small-group, and paired instruction. However, little evidence of differentiation for individual students was observed. Even when students were paired or in small groups, the class assignment appeared to be identical for all learners. However, from the twenty-three observations, it was apparent that students are being taught the appropriate standards as set by the state of Georgia in an active and positive environment.

The External Review Team would like to commend the faculty for their dedication to student achievement and to the deep sense of caring that is prevalent in the Irwin County High School community. The team would also like to commend the principal for his commitment to continuous improvement. Special appreciation is given to the many parents who participated in the external review. Insights and observations from these stakeholders were both beneficial and supportive.

The External Review Team would also like to thank the personnel of Irwin County High School for their kindness, hospitality, and transparency throughout the visit. Special gratitude is given to the agricultural department for their warm and generous welcome. Much appreciation is given to the many staff members who assisted the team each day and provided all that was necessary to make the visit a success.

The AdvancED External Review Team recommends that Irwin County High School be considered for a

new five-year term of accreditation by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission.

## Required Actions

1. Conduct detailed training in the evaluation and utilization of data including school protocols and monitoring procedures.

Primary Indicator(s) or Assurance(s):

5.3

The External Review Team concluded that data interpretation is being conducted by a small group of staff members. Teachers received data without full understanding of how it was analyzed, disaggregated, and evaluated. This has led to a disconnect with how data can drive the instructional process.

Student achievement data should guide educators in planning, providing, monitoring, and evaluating students' individual academic needs. This will lead to greater student achievement.

2. Create and implement viable, effective, and appropriate professional learning communities.

Primary Indicator(s) or Assurance(s):

3.5

Professional learning communities provide optimum opportunities for collaboration with peer teachers. From interviews with teachers and artifact review, the External Review Team determined that teachers have limited time to work together to ensure horizontal and vertical articulation. Staff members expressed a desire to collaborate and have sought to find time to work together. One department holds informal discussions during lunch. Few departments have common planning time.

Having a designated time to collaborate and work together will provide teachers with professional learning time and improve student achievement. Research indicates that teacher collaboration is crucial for success of both the teacher and the student in the classroom.

3. Establish a formal teacher mentoring program.

Primary Indicator(s) or Assurance(s):

3.7

Interviews with staff yielded information that no formal teacher induction or mentoring program was readily available. While the district does assign a mentor to a new teacher, veteran teachers who are new to the district do not receive one. The current procedure has proven to be ineffective for the staff of Irwin County High School. New teachers report and the school's AdvancED Accreditation Report confirms that it is often "sink or swim" for new staff members.

A formal mentoring program for new teachers will enhance teacher efficacy, will reinforce their classroom skills, and will provide for success in their career.

4. Create a formal professional development plan that is based upon the needs of the faculty.

Primary Indicator(s) or Assurance(s):  
3.11

Review of artifacts, observations, and interviews clearly demonstrated that there was no formal professional development plan. Staff members articulated the desire for professional learning around several topics such as differentiation, use of data, and effective use of instructional technology. Interviews also confirmed that there were resources available for training, but no plan existed to provide those opportunities.

Improving teacher skills and knowledge is one of the most important investments that local schools make in education. Professional development improves teachers' knowledge of the subject matter they are teaching and enhances their understanding of the way students learn. Extended opportunities to better understand student learning, curriculum materials and instruction, and subject-matter content can boost the performance of both teachers and students.

## Addenda

### *Next Steps*

The institution should:

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

### *Celebrating Accreditation*

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

### *About AdvancED*

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

## External Review

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