

# **External Review**

Academy for Career Education

Washoe County School District

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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.

## **Part I: Findings**

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

### **Accreditation Standards and Indicators**

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

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

**Standard 1: Purpose and Direction**

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

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

Standard		Standard Performance Level	
The school maintains and communicates a purpose and direction that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.		3.0	
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
1.1	The school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> <li>•Minutes from meetings related to development of the school's purpose</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>•Communication plan to stakeholders regarding the school's purpose</li> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•Documentation or description of the process for creating the school's purpose including the role of stakeholders</li> <li>•Purpose statements - past and present</li> <li>•Directors Presentation Accountability Report</li> </ul>	3

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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>•Agendas and/or minutes that reference a commitment to the components of the school's statement of purpose</li><li>•Interviews</li><li>•Observations</li><li>•Survey results</li><li>•The school's statement of purpose</li><li>•Accreditation Report</li><li>•Director's presentation</li></ul>	3
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>•Communication plan and artifacts that show two-way communication to staff and stakeholders</li><li>•Interviews</li><li>•Accreditation Report</li><li>•The school continuous improvement plan</li><li>•Director's presentation</li></ul>	3

### **Powerful Practices**

### **Indicator**

1. The commitment to shared values and beliefs is evident in communications that are disseminated regularly through such avenues as Facebook and the school's website.

1.2

Stakeholder survey results and interviews with staff and the Board of Directors revealed the strong sense of ownership shared by all. As documented in the accreditation report and other artifacts, the school offers a hands-on career and technical education program which is integrated with the academic program. The school's purpose, as evidenced in its mission and belief statements and staff interviews, focuses on ensuring students earn a high school diploma and are ready to become productive citizens. Each academic and career program utilizes an employable rubric which is used daily to emphasize the importance of career and life skills. The small school model, small class sizes, and use of flexible scheduling are strengths of the school's program in working to meet the needs of individual students. These factors enable the school to provide both academic and real life learning experiences that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills in an integrated setting.



**Standard 2: Governance and Leadership**

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

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

Standard	Standard Performance Level
The school operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and school effectiveness.	3.17

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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>•Communications to stakeholder about policy revisions</li><li>•School handbooks</li><li>•Director's presentation Charter school policies, bylaws, and state statutes Weekly collaboration meetings Small school model</li></ul>	3
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>•Historical compliance data</li><li>•Observations</li><li>•Accreditation Report</li><li>•Governing body minutes relating to training</li><li>•Assurances, certifications</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><li>•Board of Directors includes industry representatives Director's presentation</li></ul>	3

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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>•Communications regarding board actions</li><li>•Survey results regarding functions of the governing body</li><li>•Observations</li><li>•Agendas and minutes of meetings</li><li>•Interviews</li><li>•Small school model Director's presentation</li></ul>	3
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><li>•Director's presentation Small school model</li></ul>	4

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the school's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Minutes from meetings with stakeholders</li><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><li>•Director's presentation Small school model</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>•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

**Powerful Practices****Indicator**

1. Leadership, staff, the board of directors, the local community, and industry partners foster a culture consistent with the school's purpose and direction and that consistently holds all students to high standards in all courses of study.

2.4

As evidenced in the accreditation report, interviews with school leaders, members of the board of directors, and staff, the culture of the school is well established and well aligned with the school's mission and beliefs. The school is highly committed to providing an education which integrates the academic course of studies with the building trades, computer assisted drafting and design, and diesel programs. Industry partners ensure that performance learning outcomes and resources match industry demands. School staff take the initiative to make program changes as needed. For example, with the downturn in the economy, the building trades program adjusted the scope of their program so rather than building a house each year, curriculum and skill development was planned to fit a two year timeline. Staff members in the building trades program shared that such an adjustment has proven most positive in allowing for more in depth and individual skill development. The practice of holding Friday meetings for collaboration on a variety of issues serves to encourage interdisciplinary planning, innovative thinking, and the constant sharing of information about student progress and individual needs. Staff, as evidenced in interviews and surveys, are passionate about their commitment to shared values and to working as a team. The school reaches out to the community for mentoring opportunities through a Nevada Works grant, C-Core Mentoring, and Team Up. Stakeholder surveys reveal a high level of satisfaction with the school also. The climate of the school is safe, positive, respectful, and supportive resulting in a strong sense of pride and shared ownership.

**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.	2.58

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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>•Graduate follow-up surveys</li><li>•Learning expectations for different courses</li><li>•Posted learning objectives</li><li>•Representative samples of student work across courses</li><li>•Course schedules</li><li>•Enrollment patterns for various courses</li><li>•Course descriptions</li><li>•Observations</li><li>•Descriptions of instructional techniques</li><li>•Small school model Flexibility in scheduling</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>•Interviews</li><li>•Curriculum writing process</li><li>•Accreditation Report</li><li>•Products – scope and sequence, curriculum maps</li><li>•Lesson plans aligned to the curriculum</li><li>•Some common assessments Lack of formative assessments</li></ul>	2

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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>•Agenda items addressing these strategies</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><li>•Interdisciplinary projects</li><li>•Some professional development focused on instruction</li></ul>	3
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>•Observations</li><li>•Interviews</li><li>•Administrative classroom observation protocols and logs</li><li>•Accreditation Report</li></ul>	2

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.5	Teachers participate in collaborative learning communities to improve instruction and student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Examples of cross curricular projects, interdisciplinary instruction, and classroom action research project</li> <li>•Accreditation Report</li> <li>•Common language, protocols and reporting tools</li> <li>•Agendas and minutes of collaborative learning committees</li> <li>•Calendar/schedule of learning community meetings</li> <li>•Survey results</li> <li>•Observations</li> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•Examples of improvements to content and instructional practice resulting from collaboration</li> <li>•Friday collaboration meetings</li> </ul>	3
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> <li>•Samples of exemplars used to guide and inform student learning</li> <li>•Director's presentation</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>•Records of meetings and walk thrus/feedback sessions</li> <li>•Observations</li> <li>•Survey results</li> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•Weekly collaboration meetings for entire staff</li> <li>•Low rate of staff turnover</li> </ul>	2

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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><li>•Parental/family/caregiver involvement plan including activities, timeframes, and evaluation process</li><li>•Director's presentation</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><li>•Description of formal adult advocate structures</li><li>•Director's presentation Freshman Success Program</li></ul>	3

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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><li>•Employability rubric</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>•Brief explanation of alignment between professional learning and identified needs</li><li>•Accreditation Report</li><li>•Observations</li><li>•Director's presentation</li></ul>	2
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>	2

**Powerful Practices**

**Indicator**

1. School programs are designed and implemented to engage families in meaningful ways in the educational process, and to keep them informed of their children's learning progress.

3.8

Families are routinely kept informed of their children's academic progress through the school's information portal. Other avenues available to parents include open house, academic nights, parent centers, and parent conferences. Based on stakeholder surveys, interviews with parents, and other artifacts, stakeholder satisfaction with the availability of information related to student learning is high. During lunch on the day of the External Review Team visitation, two parents reported that the school's program was the "best thing that had ever happened" to their families. Staff and families work as a team to meet individual student learning needs when a student falls below standards. These practices are in clear alignment with the school's mission and belief statements, which place an emphasis on developing students as academically successful students and productive citizens in society.

**Opportunities for Improvement****Indicator**

1. Implement short and long range plans to utilize multiple assessments in order to effectively and systematically monitor and adjust professional instructional practices.

3.2

Based on staff surveys and interviews, the accreditation report, assessment results, lesson plans, and curriculum guides, the school currently does not utilize data from both formative and summative assessments to systematically monitor and adjust instruction. School leaders recognize this deficiency. The school's current set of data collection and analysis is lacking an overall picture of student learning at all levels. Current data focuses mostly on juniors and seniors using primarily summative data such as the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE), Preliminary School Aptitude Test (PSAT), or Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). The school will need to focus its attention on acquiring additional data indicators that will assist all staff in prioritizing where efforts should be focused to improve student learning and outcomes throughout the school year. The collection of additional student data will allow the school to narrow its focus on creating strategies that will address any needed changes in instruction or school policy to improve student learning. Focused staff training in this area will strengthen the school's ability to address identified areas also. Budget and technology concerns are obstacles that the school needs to address to accomplish the long range goals outlined in the school improvement plan that address the use of multiple assessments. The future implementation of the state Smart Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) creates a challenge for the school also. As indicated in the school improvement plan, additional assessments, such as Explore, PLAN, ACT, common assessments, and WorkKeys are being considered.

2. Design and implement formal and consistent supervision and evaluation procedures to monitor instructional practices.

3.4

As evidenced in the accreditation report and in interviews with school leaders, the need to improve supervision and evaluation procedures is recognized. As a small school, school leaders are visible on campus and in the classrooms. Some evaluation protocols, such as logs and evaluation criteria, are in place. Formal walk through practices are beginning to be utilized. Working collaboratively with all staff in the development and implementation of observation and conferencing tools tailored to the school's unique academic and career education programs, will assist school leaders in systematically monitoring instruction and learning. Formal monitoring practices will ensure instruction and learning are consistently aligned with the school's initiatives to improve student achievement.

3. Design and implement a rigorous and continuous program of professional development aligned with the school's purpose, initiatives and school improvement plan.

3.11

School staff do meet on weekly early release Fridays for collaboration on a variety of student and school business issues. Formal professional development training when aligned to the school improvement goals will provide specific and purposeful training to address learning and instructional needs. The school has recognized this need as evidenced in interviews and the school improvement plan. School leaders must allocate time and resources to develop, implement and evaluate a continuous, structured program of professional development for all staff. Such a program will provide teachers with training on how to effectively implement the common core state standards, improve instructional practices in the career programs, prepare for new assessments, and analyze assessment data in a manner that drives identified adjustments in instructional practices. The Friday meetings will serve to support this initiative if planned appropriately, and followed up with meaningful monitoring and evaluation involving all staff. The staff's voiced commitment and passion for working as a team to systematically meet school goals will work to support the implementation of well designed professional development.

**Standard 4: Resources and Support Systems**

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

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

Standard		Standard Performance Level	
The school has resources and provides services that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.		2.71	
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>•School budgets for the last three years</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>•Director's presentation Active recruiting program</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><li>•Director's presentation</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>•Safety committee responsibilities, meeting schedules, and minutes</li><li>•Director's presentation</li></ul>	3

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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>•Director's presentation Lack of a computer lab Some use of mobile laptop cart Career Technical Education programs use technology regularly for instruction</li></ul>	2
4.5	The technology infrastructure supports the school's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Survey results</li><li>•Policies relative to technology use</li><li>•Lack of budget resources Part time Information Technology contractor Grant support for three smart boards Nevada Works</li></ul>	2

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.6	The school provides support services to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Student assessment system for identifying student needs</li> <li>•Agreements with school community agencies for student-family support</li> <li>•Survey results</li> <li>•Schedule of family services, e.g., parent classes, survival skills</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>•Director' presentation Freshman Success Program Small class size Flexibility in scheduling C-Core adult mentoring program Team Up student mentoring of elementary students in community Nevada Works mentoring program for graduates Quarter system: students enroll in four classes each quarter Team-Up community resources Nevada Works Grant</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> <li>•Principal's presentation Nevada Works mentoring program Small school model Small class size</li> </ul>	3

**Powerful Practices****Indicator**

1. The school has a staff of highly qualified administrators, instructors, and support staff - many of whom have been at the school since it opened in 2003.

4.1

The director of the school, one of the founders of the program, remains the driving force of the school. The director's overview of the school was most comprehensive and informative. The majority of the teaching staff hold master's degrees. Based on stakeholder surveys, classroom observations, and interviews with parents, students, and staff, staff are particularly committed to the school's purpose, and exhibit a most caring approach in meeting the learning needs of students. Three of the board members are certified educators and many are professionals from private industry who offer their services to the school. Because of the small teacher to student ratio, teachers are more readily able to accommodate student learning needs, track student progress, and focus on career education goals. Due to the small school model, staff members often fulfill different roles. For example, the school principal often serves as a counselor to assist in meeting social, emotional, behavioral, and career planning needs of the students. A committee of teachers actively serves students by helping individuals through the college and career planning process, such as completing applications for college. Parents and students expressed how significant teacher support is in ensuring student success while in the school program.

**Opportunities for Improvement****Indicator**

1. The school's technology infrastructure has identified areas that must be addressed in support of the school's unique teaching, learning, and operational needs.

4.5

As a school focused on career education, the staff and students have access to technology which is utilized as information resources. In the academic courses, computer and internet access is available for teachers and students to supplement classroom instruction. However, evidence from stakeholder surveys, staff interviews, an interview with the contracted technology manager, the accreditation report, and the school improvement plan indicates a need for improvement in the area of technology infrastructure. As a charter school, funding sources for equipment are limited. Plans to explore financial assistance through grants are included in the school improvement plan. The newly implemented common core state standards and new assessments of learning will require new and additional online capability. Current educational research on best practices points to the value to student achievement of using computer-based software, and handheld devices such as iPads and notebooks. The staff recognizes that additional and upgraded technology will require focused training to maximize implementation of computer-based and technology supported instruction.

**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

## External Review

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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><li>•Brief description of student assessment system including range of data produced from standardized and local assessments on student learning and school performance</li><li>•Evidence that assessments are reliable and bias free</li><li>•Lack of multiple assessment measures, especially formative assessments</li></ul>	1
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>•Observations</li><li>•List of data sources related to student learning, instruction, program effectiveness, and conditions that support learning</li><li>•Accreditation Report</li><li>•Principal's presentation</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>•Observations</li><li>•Accreditation Report</li><li>•Principal's presentation</li></ul>	1

## External Review

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Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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>•Agendas, minutes of meetings related to analysis of data</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> <li>•Principal's presentation No formal process for analysis of data</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>•Minutes of board meetings regarding achievement of student learning goals</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>•School quality control procedures for monitoring information about student learning, conditions that support learning, and the achievement of school improvement goals</li> <li>•Executive summaries of student learning reports to stakeholder groups</li> <li>•Interviews</li> <li>•Principal's presentation Tracking of student achievement Placement of students based on data Flexibility of schedule Intervention plans based on assessment results</li> </ul>	4

**Powerful Practices**

**Indicator**

1. School leadership and staff communicate comprehensive information about student achievement, school improvement goals, and stakeholder expectations.

5.5

School leaders meet on a weekly basis with teachers every Friday for a collaboration meeting, which provides an opportunity to share information regarding student achievement, academic progress of individual students, school improvement goals, and other school business. Staff identify this time as valuable to better support individual student learning needs, by planning remediation through schedule changes for example. Staff meet as needed with parents to address learning and behavior issues as well. Facebook, Infinite Campus, and the school's website are readily available for staff and parents to use for communication. Interviews with parents and students confirm that communication with school staff is a strength of the program. School leaders meet with the Board of Directors monthly in a public meeting which parents may attend. Interviews with school leaders, staff and members of the board reflect the high level of open communication between these stakeholders regarding many aspects of the school program. Effective communication is a powerful tool which can be harnessed for continuous school improvement. Open and frequent communication, with a focus on student achievement and school improvement, will work to maintain accountability to the school's purpose and vision going forward.

## 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	2.51
B. High Expectations Environment	2.93
C. Supportive Learning Environment	3.06
D. Active Learning Environment	3.22
E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment	2.78
F. Well-Managed Learning Environment	2.99
G. Digital Learning Environment	1.55

## Part II: Conclusion

### Summary of the External Review

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

The External Review Team conducted their site visit on May 7 and 8th, 2013. On May 7, five team members reported to the Academy for Career Education at 7:00 a.m. to prepare for the day's review which included two hours of classroom observations, attendance at a comprehensive overview presentation by the Executive Director, interviews with school leaders, Board of Directors, teachers, parents, and students. Over the course of the two days team members interacted with all 14 teachers and conducted 17 classroom observations. The team was taken on an off site tour of the diesel program held at Truckee Meadows Community College, and the team was shown the houses built by the students in the construction program at the off campus job site. The team was able to interact with eleven students and nine parents during lunch, with three administrators in a separate conference, and with all teachers and eight board members in a scheduled focus group at the end of the day. The school was very well prepared for the External Review and provided well organized and complete artifact binders for the team's 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.

The themes that emerged from the Powerful Practices confirmed the emphasis on a unified school with a common purpose and strong direction. The small school model allows for small class sizes, a low teacher to student ratio, and much flexibility in scheduling to better meet student learning needs. Teacher commitment to shared values and beliefs in providing a success oriented, student-centered integrated curriculum focused on academics and career education is impressive. The school's motto, "Education that Works!" is adhered to by all stakeholders. Stakeholders were positive about the progress and strengths identified in their school. Parent satisfaction with the direction of the school is high and parent involvement is encouraged and evident in the school's special events and communication practices.

The most significant areas of Opportunity for Improvement are grounded within Standards 3 and 5. Specifically, the need for the school to establish and maintain a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system that utilizes both formative and summative assessments was identified. Secondly, the need for the school to develop and implement professional development for all staff focused on the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data to improve teaching and learning was identified. Using multiple assessment measures will serve to provide more meaningful and ongoing information about student growth. The systematic use of such data coupled with purposeful training designed to provide teachers with the skills to adjust teaching practices in response to data analysis will have a positive impact on achievement. Effective monitoring and evaluation practices by school leaders will provide valuable ongoing support and guidance to teachers in this process. These areas, supported by

research resources, are identified as priorities by the school in the self- assessment document and the long range school improvement plan.

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 focused on the observable evidence in classroom environments that are conducive to learning. A theme that both the school and the External Review Team were in agreement was in the area of a well-managed learning environment with high expectations. This was evidenced by collaboration among students, student engagement, and mutual respect for peers and adults. High student engagement was observed in the career education classrooms. The identified need to improve the technology infrastructure received support in the classroom observations. The use of technology was observed to be low. As technology upgrades take place student engagement with digital learning tools will increase.

Congratulations to the entire Academy for Career Education school community on its commitment to accreditation. As the school engages in the process, the school will find that all elements of the school become stronger. The entire school community, and, most importantly, students benefit as the school works to improve its systems and processes to increase school-wide effectiveness and enhance school learning. The External Review Team is grateful for the opportunity to be part of the Academy for Career Education's accreditation process and appreciates the warm hospitality extended by the students and staff during the one day visitation. As a result of the visit, the External Review Team recommends that the Academy for Career Education be granted a new five-year term of accreditation by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission..

## Required Actions

1. Maintain and utilize an assessment system that produces student achievement data from multiple assessment measures, including formative and summative assessments about student learning and school performance.

Primary Indicator or Assurance: 5.1

Documentation included in the school's accreditation report provides clear evidence that school leaders and staff recognize the need to utilize additional assessment measures to address individual student needs and to drive school improvement efforts. Summative assessment results from such measures as the ASVAB, the ACT, the PSAT, and the Nevada state High School Proficiency Exams, are evaluated on a limited basis. However, the rate of student participation in the ASVAB, ACT, and PSAT has been low, and the HSPE math exam is the only measure of student achievement in math available to the school. Some disaggregation of the summative data has taken place. As evidenced in the school's school improvement plans, goals and action steps include plans to seek out funding so that all students can participate in the PSAT exam, to create incentives so all students participate in the ASVAB, to develop pre and post assessments and common finals in academic classes, to establish a data portfolio for each student, to adopt new Career and Technical Education assessments, and to utilize additional assessments, such as EXPLORE, PLAN, and Work Keys. Transitioning to the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) presents a challenge for the school. Adopting additional assessments, especially formative assessments showing student growth in learning, will strengthen the staff's ability to make systematic sound decisions that will improve both teaching and learning.

2. Develop and implement training for all staff in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of assessment data to improve teaching and learning.

Primary Indicator or Assurance: 5.3

Interviews with school leaders and staff, observations, the accreditation report, and the school improvement plan all provide evidence that staff lack the expertise to evaluate assessments of learning in a systematic manner that would lead to valid adjustments in instructional practices. Information regarding assessment results is shared with staff, but little evidence shows such knowledge is used to drive instruction consistently. The school has demonstrated the ability to meet or surpass the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements every year since it opened. However, implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) will demand increased rigor in instructional practices. School leaders acknowledge the changes will require all staff to focus on a systematic process of assessment which will provide ongoing information regarding student growth. School leaders will attend trainings and then share what they have learned with staff. Friday meetings can be used to engage teachers in analyzing data and then collaborating on implementing best practices to address identified learning needs. Developing the ability to use data, both formative and summative, to improve achievement will enable teachers to more accurately monitor student growth and address individual needs.

## Part III: 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.

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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.