Report of the
External Review Team
for
Pierson Vocational HIgh School

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AdvancED

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Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Use of Diagnostic Tools

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

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

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

Index of Education Quality

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

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

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

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

Benchmark Data

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

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

Powerful Practices

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

Opportunities for Improvement

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

Improvement Priorities

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

The Review

The External Review Team that visited Pierson Vocational High School on November 18-19, 2014, was comprised of three members. In preparation for the Review, the Lead Evaluator visited the school on June 24, 2014, to preview the process for school leaders and to discuss logistics. In addition, frequent email and telephone conversations prior to the visit were helpful in ensuring the review would be well-organized and would proceed smoothly. Communication between the Lead Evaluator and team members prior to the visit was useful in establishing both individual responsibilities and a clear understanding of the purpose and nature of the Review. Prior to the on-site portion of the Review, each team member reviewed the school's Accreditation Report, including the Self Assessment, Executive Summary, the Stakeholder Feedback and Student Performance Diagnostics and the Assurances. Each team member arrived with a working knowledge of the school and a set of questions and concerns regarding areas they felt needed to be more deeply explored. When the team arrived on site, all pieces were in place, and the Review proceeded smoothly.

The External Review Team thanks the leadership, faculty and staff of Pierson Vocational High School for their hard work, cooperative nature and hospitality during the Review. The team felt very welcome at the school. Students, parents and school employees, to a person, were very receptive of the team's presence and were most helpful as the work was completed. The obvious willingness of the school to use the Review as a tool to

continue to improve was very much appreciated. All groups interviewed were very open and honest. The team felt that the school was quite transparent. No attempt was made to hide anything; to the contrary, the school, through its work in preparation for the Review, identified areas in need of improvement and was, in several cases, already at work on the implementation of improvement efforts.

Even though the school is quite small, the number of stakeholders interviewed was impressive and compared very favorably with schools many times larger. Overall, the team interviewed 20 people, and of these, five were parents. The team was impressed with the availability of stakeholders to provide information from their various perspectives. This was a great help in getting a clear picture of what Pierson Vocational High School is all about and of the perceptions of a variety of individuals.

Stakeholders were interviewed by members of the External Review Team to gain their perspectives on topics relevant to the institution's effectiveness and student performance. The feedback gained through the stakeholder interviews was considered with other evidences and data to support the findings of the External Review. The following chart depicts the numbers of persons interviewed representative of various stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder Interviewed	Number
Administrators	1
Instructional Staff	4
Support Staff	5
Students	5
Parents/Community/Business Leaders	5
Total	20

Results

Teaching and Learning Impact

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

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

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

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

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

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

Standard 3 - Teaching and Assessing for Learning

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

Indicator	Description	External Review Score	AdvancED Network Average
3.1	The school's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at the next level.	3.00	2.88
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.	3.00	2.53
3.3	Teachers engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	3.00	2.67
3.4	School leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	3.00	2.78
3.5	Teachers participate in collaborative learning communities to improve instruction and student learning.	1.33	2.63
3.6	Teachers implement the school's instructional process in support of student learning.	2.67	2.66
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the school's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	1.67	2.58
3.8	The school engages families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keeps them informed of their children's learning progress.	2.67	3.12

Indicator	Description	External Review Score	AdvancED Network Average
3.9	The school has a formal structure whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the school who supports that student's educational experience.	4.00	3.07
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.	3.00	2.77
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	2.00	2.57
3.12	The school provides and coordinates learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	3.00	2.71

Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement

The school implements a comprehensive assessment system that generates a range of data about student learning and school effectiveness and uses the results to guide continuous improvement.

Indicator	Description	External Review Score	AdvancED Network Average
5.1	The school establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	2.67	2.72
5.2	Professional and support staff continuously collect, analyze, and apply learning from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data about student learning, instruction, program evaluation, and organizational conditions.	2.33	2.44
5.3	Professional and support staff are trained in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.	2.33	2.09
5.4	The school engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level.	2.67	2.53
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.	3.00	2.78

Student Performance Diagnostic

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

Evaluative Criteria	External Review Score	AdvancED Network Average
Assessment Quality	3.00	3.10
Test Administration	3.33	3.47
Equity of Learning	2.33	2.74
Quality of Learning	3.00	2.98

Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™)

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

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

The External Review Team conducted 15 classroom observations. Given the small size of the school, the team was able to observe every teacher but two and, because of the manner in which courses are scheduled at the school, was able to see each teacher at least twice while teaching different courses. The environment with the highest rating was the Well-Managed Learning Environment. Students in all classrooms were respectful of and cooperative with the teacher and their peers. Each person knew what kind of behavior was expected in the classroom and in the school as a whole. During passing periods and before and after school, students displayed appropriate behavior. The team feels that the positive culture that characterizes the school creates an atmosphere where adults and students alike can fulfill their obligations while feeling safe, comfortable and respected.

The second highest rated environment was in the area of Supportive Learning. In the classrooms multiple courses are being taught at the same time. The team was impressed with the ability of the teachers to work with multiple content areas and multiple grade levels simultaneously. Students were very often working independently, completing personal requirements for course mastery and, ultimately, graduation. As students were involved in the differing varieties of tasks, teachers were able to attend to each student, addressing her/his personal needs.

The third highest ranking environment was the Active Learning Environment. This environment was a bit difficult to assess, as students were involved in so many different tasks. There was little, if any, direct, whole group instruction. Students entered classrooms and began immediately to involve themselves in the individualized work they knew they had to complete. A fair amount of this work was rather passive in nature. For example, a good deal of computer-based instruction was used. Students involved in this modality worked quietly, by themselves to go through the instructional program. Teachers checked in periodically with these students, but this was done on an individual basis. Other students were completing packetized material or were working on individual projects. In both of these cases, the nature of the work precluded most student-to-student interaction although, in a few cases, some small group work was observed.

The Equitable Learning Environment ranked fourth on the eleot summary. This lower ranking, however, does not in any way mean that students are not treated equitably. Again, the nature of this school and the manner in which it is organized causes the eleot scores to underestimate the degree to which equity is present in the classrooms and across the school. The school serves a very unique population in very special ways, and the eleot™ indicators are not well-geared to assess this domain.

The fifth highest environment was the High Expectations Environment. In this case, the team felt that there was a need to provide students with higher levels of expectations. The nature of the instruction, be it packets, computer-based, or individual projects, was tailored to provide students the skills and knowledge they need to complete course and graduation requirements and build their ability to pass the state-mandated test. Little or no opportunity to push past basic requirements into more complex and rigorous work was provided. While the team understands the urgency of addressing the basic needs of the students, it was felt that this emphasis limits the opportunities for students to work at higher levels.

Sixth among the environments was the Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment. While teachers moved among students throughout class periods, checking in and assisting students as requested, the nature of the student work was such that they worked primarily on their own. This approach, and the basic nature of the work, kept students moving through their assignments without a great deal of interaction with the teacher. The team felt that while teachers seemed fully cognizant of individual student progress, this is an area where a bit more attention and discussion of tasks might raise the level of rigor and allow students the opportunity to use higher level thinking skills.

The lowest ranking environment was the Digital Leaning Environment. While the school had an excellent technological infrastructure and was well-equipped in terms of available hardware, the technology was used primarily to deliver instruction. Very little use of the available technology as a tool for learning was observed. In a few cases, students were observed doing some very basic research on the Internet, but beyond that the equipment was only used for the delivery of programmed instruction.
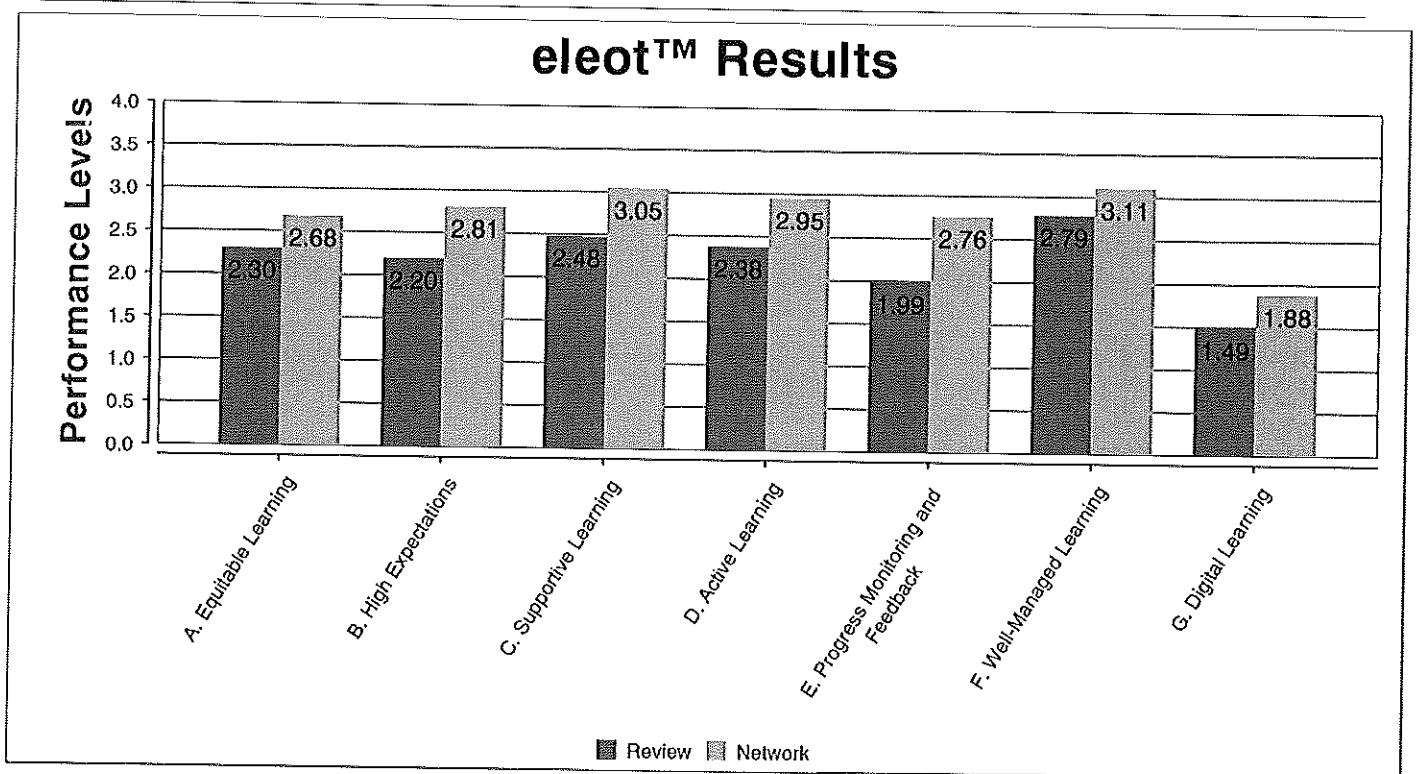
Overall, in all environments, the school scored considerably lower than the AdvancED Network (AEN) averages. The team felt that these low scores were primarily due to the special nature of this school. As team members observed classes and rated them in terms of the eleot indicators, it was felt that the instrument, which is geared to more traditionally organized schools, caused ratings to be lower than might be observed in the more traditional models. The value of the ratings to the school, however, remains. The ratings can serve as valuable tools for determining where improvements might be made and add useful information to discussions of the way instruction is delivered. The AEN averages, while very comprehensive and the result of thousands of observations across many schools, are reflective, on the whole, of classrooms in traditional schools.

A primary concern of the team was the low score in the Digital Learning Environment. Pierson Vocational High School has an excellent technological infrastructure and an abundance of hardware, including many laptop computers, full Internet access and interactive whiteboards in every room, to name just a few. However, these resources could be much better used as learning tools. The powerful nature of the resources was largely

minimized by being used primarily for programmed instruction and for presentation of information. The impact of this environment could be much more effective in helping the school improve in Standard 3, Teaching and Assessing for Learning.

The Well-Managed Learning and Supportive Learning Environments that ranked first and second are indicative of the positive, very supportive culture that permeates the school as a whole. Interviews with students and parents confirmed the team's perceptions that these two areas are key to the decisions made by families to bring students to this school. The majority of the students have not been successful in larger, more traditionally organized schools. At Pierson, they feel supported and cared about. The small size of the student population and the easy interaction with faculty and staff makes this school a much more positive experience for these students. For many Pierson students, this may be their last chance to achieve success in high school. The overall school culture and the attention given by teachers to the individual needs of each student provide a very supportive environment in which students fully understand what is expected of them and willingly conduct themselves in a fashion that maximizes their opportunity to be successful at completing the requirements of high school graduation.

The External Review Team very much enjoyed visiting classrooms at Pierson Vocational High School. Watching teachers working with rooms full of students having a wide variety of individual needs and teaching two or three different courses simultaneously brought forth a great respect for the hard work the school is doing to provide quality, highly focused educational services to a very special group of students. Viewing the classes through the lens of the eleot environments will provide the school a good source of information to make adjustments to organization, curriculum, and instruction as it strives to become an even better school. Pierson Vocational High school is a special place, and it serves a very special group of students. The team hopes that the eleot ratings provide a window which can be used to help identify needs and as a basis for continuous improvement in the future.

eleot™ Results

Chart: Performance Levels (y-axis, 0.0 to 4.0) by category, comparing Review and Network bars.

Category	Review	Network
A. Equitable Learning	2.30	2.68
B. High Expectations	2.20	2.81
C. Supportive Learning	2.48	3.05
D. Active Learning	2.38	2.95
E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback	1.99	2.76
F. Well-Managed Learning	2.79	3.11
G. Digital Learning	1.49	1.88

■ Review　▨ Network

Findings

Improvement Priority

Develop and implement a formal process to build and effectively use professional learning communities. (Indicators 3.5)

Evidence and Rationale

Interviews and observations brought the External Review Team to understand that, as is quite common in small schools, Pierson Vocational High School relies quite heavily on informal approaches to decision making and development of interventions. Pierson is a very small school; every teacher interacts with every other teacher every day. The smallness of the school is an asset in that it allows people to talk with one another regularly about common concerns and perhaps to develop strategies to address perceived problems. However, this smallness can also be a problem. Informal approaches result in reactive rather than proactive responses to issues and concerns.

A formal structure of collaboration, with regular meeting times and specific protocols designed to effectively bring collective effort to bear on commonly agreed upon concerns, will bring better results than the hit or miss approaches fostered through the informal process currently in operation. Given the size of the faculty, there might be just one or two professional learning communities. This is a place where the school's small size can be a real strength. If one or two small groups can gather regularly, address agreed upon topics or concerns in a systematic manner, with established protocols for analyzing situations and finding solutions, the probability of arriving at productive, longer range outcomes is much greater.

Opportunity for Improvement

Develop and implement a formal structure to better involve families in school operations and their children's learning.

(Indicators 3.8)

Evidence and Rationale

Interviews with school leaders and faculty indicated that the participation of parents and families in the school is minimal. Efforts have been made to expand methods of communication but with only limited success in actually bringing parents into full partnership. School personnel would very much like for parents to be more involved. The External Review Team's interviews with five parents indicated they are quite pleased with the services being provided to their children but they see themselves, for the most part, as concerned parents who trust the school to do good things for students. While this is admirable and is the kind of perception that schools want parents to have, a higher level of active involvement of parents would make the school an even better place for their children. Parents can be involved in many important ways. They should be involved with development of long range improvement plans and in the making of decisions that will affect their children's education.

Efforts to bring parents and other stakeholders into more active roles within the school will benefit the school and the community. It is sometimes difficult to get parents actively involved. They have jobs and other family responsibilities to which they must attend. But bringing them into the fold is important. Having a structure in place to recruit and meaningfully engage parents in their students' learning will help the school gain access to this valuable resource.

Opportunity for Improvement

Develop and implement a process to ensure that all faculty are trained in the gathering and analysis of pertinent student performance data and are able to use these data to appropriately modify instruction and guide improvement efforts.

(Indicators 5.3)

Evidence and Rationale

Teachers gather data every day. Some of these data are summative measures, such as state-mandated test results, unit tests, and end-of-course examination scores. Much of the data teachers gather are more formative in nature, gathered in less formal fashion, through individual conversations, quiz results and progress monitoring activities. Regardless of the summative or formative nature of these data, they all contribute to the building of a complete picture of student progress. The data are also useful in assessing the efficacy of instructional strategies, curriculum design or the choice of materials.

To make effective use of data to inform practice, teachers must know which data are most useful and in what way. They need to be able to analyze data from multiple sources, triangulate, and make decisions that will allow them to improve the quality of services they deliver to students. At Pierson, the ability of teachers to effectively use data varies widely. Implementation of a clearly focused, site-based training program will do much to build a more cohesive approach to classroom practice and overall school improvement.

Opportunity for Improvement

Develop and implement a site-based program of professional development focused on issues germane to the school.

(Indicators 3.11)

Evidence and Rationale

Interviews and examination of documents revealed that professional development activities at the school, while plentiful in number, were often not appropriately focused to address the needs of Pierson Vocational High School. A significant portion of professional development is district directed and provides rather "broad brush" approaches to issues that may or may not be particularly useful at the site level. The provision of some time at the site level to directly address school improvement goals and identified site-level needs will help personnel better address the needs of the students. This time, however, must be productively used and not result in a free-for-all approach. Activities must be developed in response to actual needs, and participation must be school wide.

A formal process to select professional development areas, develop well-planned activities to address these areas, and a means to evaluate the efficacy of the professional development upon its implementation are crucial if a program is to meet with success.

Leadership Capacity

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

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

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

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

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

Standard 1 - Purpose and Direction

The school maintains and communicates a purpose and direction that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.

Indicator	Description	External Review Score	AdvancED Network Average
1.1	The school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	2.33	2.75
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.	3.00	3.04
1.3	The school's leadership implements a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	2.00	2.61

Standard 2 - Governance and Leadership

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

Indicator	Description	External Review Score	AdvancED Network Average
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the school.	3.00	2.98
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	2.33	2.96
2.3	The governing body ensures that the school leadership has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.	3.33	3.18
2.4	Leadership and staff foster a culture consistent with the school's purpose and direction.	3.00	3.13
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the school's purpose and direction.	2.33	2.82
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice and student success.	3.00	2.82

Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic

Stakeholder Feedback is the third of three primary areas of evaluation in AdvancED's Performance Accreditation model. The AdvancED surveys (student, parent, and teacher) are directly correlated to the

AdvancED Standards and indicators. They provide not only direct information about stakeholder satisfaction but also become a source of data for triangulation by the External Review Team as it evaluates indicators.

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

Evaluative Criteria	External Review Score	AdvancED Network Average
Questionnaire Administration	1.00	3.38
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	2.67	3.08

Findings
Powerful Practice
A very positive culture characterizes Pierson Vocational High School; it supports the school in its mission of providing quality services for a student population that has not adjusted well in more traditional settings. (Indicators 1.2, 2.4)

Evidence and Rationale
Interviews with every stakeholder group (students, parents, teachers, support staff and school leadership) revealed a very common understanding of the purpose of Pierson Vocational High School. These groups all described the school as a "community" or "family." They expressed a common belief that the school exists to provide students another chance at getting a quality education and becoming successful, contributing citizens. The effects of this positive culture were observed in every setting. Classes function effectively. Students monitor their own behavior and become self-managed contributors to an environment supportive of all participants. Teachers value the culture and find that they are stimulated and encouraged to do their very best to meet the needs of every student. All adults at the school are very comfortable "wearing many hats" and are very willing to go beyond the normal job expectations to make situations better for the students and families who rely upon the school to help them achieve their personal goals.

When an organization develops a culture around which all stakeholders can rally, everyone's work becomes more pleasant and productive. In schools, the primary target of everyone's efforts is to provide each and every student the best possible educational experience. This is much more effectively done when the students feel they are full participants in their education and there is a supportive group of adults who will do whatever it takes to help them be the best they can be. Culture drives everything in any organization, including schools. When this culture is positive and supportive of the school's driving purpose, good things happen.

Resource Utilization

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

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

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

Standard 4 - Resources and Support Systems

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

Indicator	Description	External Review Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.1	Qualified professional and support staff are sufficient in number to fulfill their roles and responsibilities necessary to support the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program.	3.00	2.95
4.2	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the school.	3.33	3.00
4.3	The school maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	3.33	3.11
4.4	Students and school personnel use a range of media and information resources to support the school's educational programs.	3.33	2.83
4.5	The technology infrastructure supports the school's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	3.33	2.56

Indicator	Description	External Review Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.6	The school provides support services to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	3.00	2.89
4.7	The school provides services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.	3.67	2.80

Conclusion

The positive culture that pervades every aspect of Pierson Vocational High school is a great asset. The clientele is made up of students who have not met with success in more traditional schools. As the team spoke with students and parents and observed classes, it became quite apparent that the students were finally receiving services in an environment in which they felt comfortable, included and valued. The commitment of the adult personnel at the school reflects their individual and collective desire to do their very best to help their students achieve personal goals and move into the larger world as fully functional, positively contributing citizens.

The school's small size lends itself to helping students feel included. It allows teachers and other adults to get to know individual students on a deeper level than is possible in larger schools. This is important. Students talked about having access to teachers when they needed assistance. They talked about the school as a "family" within which they feel very much supported and cared about.

Close monitoring of student progress and the use of a variety of approaches to meet student needs helps students meet graduation requirements effectively. Guidance services are effectively provided to help students navigate the high school experience and develop goals and plans for their postsecondary lives.

Pierson has been granted significant autonomy by the district governance structure. This has resulted in the school being able to access high levels of technological resources and to make decisions that effectively address the needs of its clientele.

A major challenge for the school is to provide for the wide variety of needs brought by students with so few personnel. This requires teachers to teach multiple courses simultaneously (e.g., economics, United States history and government) or to teach multiple levels of a common course (e.g., English) at the same time, in the same space. However, the school does this remarkably well, through the use of computerized instructional programs, individual projects, packets and other self-paced, self-directed individualized approaches. This does, however, make continuous progress monitoring and provision of very targeted feedback more difficult than in a traditional high school classroom.

Another challenge is for all teachers to make more effective use of both the summative and formative student performance data available to them. Specifically designed training in the gathering, analysis and use of data to inform instruction is needed. This will enhance teachers' ability to address individual student needs.

More formalized, systematic approaches to school operations will be useful. The small size of the faculty makes informal approaches easy to accomplish. However, this informality is also a problem in that it tends to produce reactive responses to individual situations rather than the proactive, systematic, and more broadly applicable responses which are, in the long term, more effective than the results of the informal approach.

The Improvement Priority noted in this report deals with the establishment of professional learning communities at the school. This priority will result in a more formalized and systematic approach to continuous

improvement and to the finding of better solutions to identified issues. Some school personnel expressed the opinion that becoming too formal will be harmful to the informal collaboration they have in place. This is not the case. The informal processes, greatly facilitated by the school's small size and the close knit nature of the faculty, are true assets that contribute greatly to the success the school has in dealing with individual student issues. But this smallness will also be an asset to the resolution of bigger issues, the development of longer range plans, and a collective focusing of efforts on specifically defined school-wide goals and objectives.

Improvement Priorities

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

- Develop and implement a formal process to build and effectively use professional learning communities.

Accreditation Recommendation
Index of Education Quality

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

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

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

	External Review IEQ Score	AdvancED Network Average
Overall Score	276.92	282.79
Teaching and Learning Impact	271.43	274.14
Leadership Capacity	254.55	296.08
Resource Utilization	328.57	286.32

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

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

Addenda

Team Roster

Member	Brief Biography
Dr. Thomas C Scarborough	Tom spent 16 years as a classroom teacher at the high school level, teaching biology, physical science, and human relations. He holds a B.S. in Wildlife Biology, and an M.ED. and Ph.D. in Secondary Education, all from the University of Arizona. Tom served four years as an assistant principal for curriculum and instruction, and 10 years as principal, both at the high school level. He served within Tucson Unified School District as a leadership coach for five years. Since leaving the district in 2007, Tom has worked as a leadership coach and professional developer. He has worked with AdvancED/NCA for many years, and very much enjoys working with a wide variety of schools and communities and helping them provide quality services to the students and families they serve.
Ms. Catherine A Baird	Document Reviewer. Former administrator with North Central Association in Tempe, Arizona.
Ms. Melinda Christine Escarcega	Melinda Escarcega is a Cochise County, Arizona native beginning her 21st year in Education. She currently is an Assistant Principal for Buena High School which serves about 2200 students. As a second year Assistant Principal, she is over the attendance office, discipline for tenth and eleventh grade, as well as the evaluator for the math and foreign language department. Prior to administration, she worked 4 years at Buena as a math teacher, specializing in at risk students teaching algebra foundations, algebra and financial literacy. Before moving to Buena, she spent thirteen years in a neighboring district, and five years teaching math in Atlanta Georgia. Melinda holds a Bachelors of Arts in Secondary Education and a Master's in Secondary Administration with emphasis on Instruction and Curriculum.
Mrs. Luvette A Russell	Luvette worked with the Bureau of Indian Education as a elementary teacher, special education teacher, special education coordinator, and as a federal programs specialist before retiring after thirty-seven years in 2011. She has worked with several Native American communities in Arizona and has provided technical assistance and professional development to other Native American communities in other states. She is a board member for the Bureau of Indian Education's Advisory Board for Exceptional Education. Luvette has participated as a team member on Advanc-Ed review teams since 2011 and has enjoyed the experience of visiting a variety of schools in the Tucson area who strive to provide quality educational opportunities for their students.

Next Steps

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

About AdvancED

AdvancED is the world's largest education community, representing 32,000 public and private schools and systems across the United States and in 75 countries worldwide and educating 16 million students.

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

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

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