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External Review

Graded School

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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.	•Minutes from meetings related to development of the school's purpose •Survey results •Accreditation Report •Examples of communications to stakeholders about the school's purpose (i.e. website, newsletters, annual report, student handbook) •Communication plan to stakeholders regarding the school's purpose •Interviews •Documentation or description of the process for creating the school's purpose including the role of stakeholders •Observations •Purpose statements - past and present	3

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.	•Agendas and/or minutes that reference a commitment to the components of the school's statement of purpose •Interviews •Accreditation Report •Survey results •Observations •The school's statement of purpose •School Improvement Plan Online curriculum sources Student support website	3
1.3	The school's leadership implements a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	•Interviews •Observations •Survey results •The school data profile •Accreditation Report •Agenda, minutes from continuous improvement planning meetings •Communication plan and artifacts that show two-way communication to staff and stakeholders •The school continuous improvement plan •Key Performance Indicators PLC Website Curriculum Review Plan	3

Opportunities for Improvement *Indicator*

1. Ensure a more systematic, documented use of the school's continuous improvement process in order to further optimize conditions that support student learning school wide.
   Evidence:

   In recent years the school leadership has strongly supported a series of important initiatives that are focused on continuous improvement, as evidenced by: the development of a clear Purpose, Key Performance Indicators, a School Improvement Plan, a Strategic Plan, a professional learning program, human resource allocations focused on improving organizational effectiveness, and comments from various stakeholder groups. The school is now poised to require and document the use of a systematic continuous improvement process that will hold all school personnel accountable for the overall quality of the implementation of the interventions and strategies identified by the school as being supportive of improved student learning.

   Rationale:

   Schools in which all personnel hold one another accountable for the quality of all interventions, strategies, activities, and objectives through a systematic, continuous process of evaluation and review will ensure the continual improvement of the overall conditions that support student learning.

1.3

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

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the school.	•Student handbooks •Governing body policies, procedures, and practices •Staff handbooks •Accreditation Report •Observations •Interviews •Communications to stakeholder about policy revisions •School handbooks •Admissions Policy PTA Survey Results	3
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	•Interviews •Accreditation Report •Governing body minutes relating to training •Communication plan to inform all staff on code of ethics, responsibilities, conflict of interest •List of assigned staff for compliance •Proof of legal counsel •Assurances, certifications •Governing body training plan •Findings of internal and external reviews of compliance with laws, regulations, and policies •Communications about program regulations •Observations •Historical compliance data •Governing body policies on roles and responsibilities, conflict of interest •Governing code of ethics	3

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.	•Roles and responsibilities of school leadership •School improvement plan developed by the school •Observations •Accreditation Report •Stakeholder input and feedback •Maintenance of consistent academic oversight, planning, and resource allocation •Interviews •Communications regarding board actions •Survey results regarding functions of the governing body •Agendas and minutes of meetings	4
2.4	Leadership and staff foster a culture consistent with the school's purpose and direction.	•Observations •Examples of collaboration and shared leadership •Survey results •Interviews •Examples of decisions aligned with the school's statement of purpose •Accreditation Report •Examples of decisions in support of the school's continuous improvement plan	3

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the school's purpose and direction.	•Minutes from meetings with stakeholders •Observations •Copies of surveys or screen shots from online surveys •Accreditation Report •Survey responses •Involvement of stakeholders in a school improvement plan •Interviews •Communication plan •Weekly Communication Models PTA Coffees	3
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice and student success.	•Observations •Examples of professional development offerings and plans tied specifically to the results from supervision and evaluation •Governing body policy on supervision and evaluation •Supervision and evaluation documents with criteria for improving professional practice and student success noted •Job specific criteria •Interviews •Accreditation Report •Representative supervision and evaluation reports	3

Powerful Practices   *Indicator*

1. The collaborative working relationship between the Board of Directors and School   2.3
    Superintendent has effectively preserved the autonomy of the Learning Leadership
    Team and unified efforts in developing and implementing a thoughtful and
    comprehensive School Improvement Plan.

    Evidence:

    The school administration and Board of Directors have displayed a concerted
    effort to identify benchmarks and develop both Strategic and School Improvement
    Plans that reflect and realizes the school mission and with the objective of
    assuring continuous school improvement. This been undertaken through the
    creation of several Board committees and the resolve to involve the participation of
    Board, school administration and school stakeholders. The end result has been
    the establishment of four strategic categories: Dedication to Excellence,
    Commitment to Learning, Empowerment to Create a Better World, and Strategic
    Growth and Resource Development.

    Rationale:

    A strong working relationship that allows the School Superintendent and Board of
    Directors to support one another is dependent upon a clear definition of respective
    roles which will in turn support an ongoing, effective school operation.

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.	2.92

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.	•Survey results •Interviews •Learning expectations for different courses •Course schedules •Accreditation Report •Lesson plans •Graduate follow-up surveys •Observations •Posted learning objectives •Representative samples of student work across courses •Enrollment patterns for various courses •Course descriptions •Descriptions of instructional techniques	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.	•Interviews •Curriculum guides •Observations •A description of the systematic review process for curriculum, instruction, and assessment •Common assessments •Standards-based report cards •Accreditation Report •Surveys results •Curriculum writing process •Products – scope and sequence, curriculum maps •Lesson plans aligned to the curriculum	2

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.3	Teachers engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	•Teacher evaluation criteria •Agenda items addressing these strategies •Professional development focused on these strategies •Authentic assessments •Examples of teacher use of technology as an instructional resource •Examples of student use of technology as a learning tool •Student work demonstrating the application of knowledge •Findings from supervisor walk-thrus and observations •Surveys results •Observations •Accreditation Report •Interviews •Interdisciplinary projects	3
3.4	School leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	•Curriculum maps •Documentation of collection of lesson plans and grade books •Observations •Supervision and evaluation procedures •Interviews •Peer or mentoring opportunities and interactions •Surveys results •Administrative classroom observation protocols and logs •Accreditation Report	3

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.5	Teachers participate in collaborative learning communities to improve instruction and student learning.	•Examples of cross curricular projects, interdisciplinary instruction, and classroom action research project •Common language, protocols and reporting tools •Agendas and minutes of collaborative learning committees •Calendar/schedule of learning community meetings •Survey results •Observations •Interviews •Accreditation Report •Examples of improvements to content and instructional practice resulting from collaboration	3
3.6	Teachers implement the school's instructional process in support of student learning.	•Examples of learning expectations and standards of performance •Survey results •Interviews •Observations •Examples of assessments that prompted modification in instruction •Accreditation Report	3

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the school's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	•Records of meetings and walk thrus/feedback sessions •Observations •Survey results •Accreditation Report •Interviews •Professional learning calendar with activities for instructional support of new staff •Descriptions and schedules of mentoring, coaching, and induction programs with references to school beliefs and values about teaching and learning •Personnel manuals with information related to new hires including mentoring, coaching, and induction practices •Online new teacher tool	3
3.8	The school engages families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keeps them informed of their children's learning progress.	•Accreditation Report •Observations •Survey results •List of varied activities and communications modes with families, e.g., info portal, online, newsletters, parent centers, academic nights, open house, early release days •Calendar outlining when and how families are provided information on child's progress •Interviews •Parental/family/caregiver involvement plan including activities, timeframes, and evaluation process •PTA Coffees	4

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
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.	•Survey results •Interviews •Observations •Accreditation Report •Curriculum and activities of formal adult advocate structure •Master schedule with time for formal adult advocate structure •Description of formal adult advocate structures •Counseling Program Advisory Program Conference Schedule	3
3.10	Grading and reporting are based on clearly defined criteria that represent the attainment of content knowledge and skills and are consistent across grade levels and courses.	•Accreditation Report •Observations •Evaluation process for grading and reporting practices •Survey results •Interviews •Sample report cards for each grade level and for all courses •Sample communications to stakeholders about grading and reporting •Policies, processes, and procedures on grading and reporting	2
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	•Results of evaluation of professional learning program. •Observations •Evaluation tools for professional learning •Survey results •Brief explanation of alignment between professional learning and identified needs •Interviews •Crosswalk between professional learning and school purpose and direction •Accreditation Report	3

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.12	The school provides and coordinates learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	•Survey results •List of learning support services and student population served by such services •Accreditation Report •Observations •Training and professional learning related to research on unique characteristics of learning •Data used to identify unique learning needs of students •Interviews	3

Powerful Practices   *Indicator*

1. The school affords multiple ways in which families can monitor their children's learning and participate in the life of the school.
   Evidence: 3.8

   Interviews with administrators, teachers, and parents confirm that there are numerous ways to keep appraised of student progress and be involved in the school. Parents and students expressed satisfaction with the recently implemented Veracross system which gives them access to ongoing information about course expectations, information, and grades. Review of artifacts such as Open House agendas and power points, Middle School Student Conference parameters, and Reflection Template for student-led conferences, Transition Meeting Power Points for fifth and eighth grade parents, report cards, Student Support Plans and parent-teacher conferences validate the variety of pathways to secure information and monitor student academic growth. Along with overseeing their children's academic progress, parents' involvement in the life of the school is encouraged through opportunities for receiving information and participation. The External Review Team examined artifacts corroborating the options available including Parent Teacher Association (PTA), surveys, Annual Report, the Graded Gazette (weekly online school newspaper), Aquila (school yearbook), Talon (high school magazine), arts and athletic events, volunteer program, PTA, Graded Fund and Graded Campus Project.

   Rationale:

   Research has found that active and supported parent involvement in their children's school positively impacts academic achievement.

Opportunities for Improvement

Indicator

1. Use disaggregated data from analyses of multiple measures to inform instructional and curricular decisions and guide professional practice.
   Evidence:

   The External Review Team reviewed artifacts related to the multiple assessments administered within and across specific divisions. Among the academic measurement instruments and databases examined were Measures of Achievement (MAP), Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), SAT, International Baccalaureate (IB) rubrics, and the middle school and lower school Internal Writing Assessment. While data from these assessments is available for determining student growth, it is not currently analyzed and used systematically to inform decisions regarding curriculum, instruction, or professional practice. Conversations in interviews with the Learning Leadership Team (LLT) and individually with administrators confirmed that the school needs a comprehensive data plan that enables analyses and identification of individual, group and whole school trends.

   Rationale:

   The disaggregation of multiple assessments enables a school to recognize academic achievement patterns important for purposeful and effective instructional, curricular and operational decisions.

3.2

2. Research, design and implement at structure comprised of policies, processes, and procedures based on clearly defined criteria that enable determination of each student's academic achievement of content knowledge and skills.
   Evidence:

   The External Review Team reviewed artifacts related to ascertaining student achievement for identified benchmarks and goals for each content area across the grade levels. Among those reviewed were the Descriptors of Achievement, Veracross, content unit plans, handbooks, and report cards. Interviews with teachers, administration and parents further clarified the process currently implemented. As was explained in several interviews, grading within content areas and across levels is at the discretion of the teachers as long as they use the Descriptors of Achievement to guide the decisions. As was stated, the "grading practice is descriptive rather than prescriptive." The International Baccalaureate courses are the exception.

   Rationale:

   Consistency in specific grading expectations across grades and divisions enables more certainty in student achievement and readiness for the next grade level.

3.10

Standard 4: Resources and Support Systems

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

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

Standard		Standard Performance Level
The school has resources and provides services that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.		3.14
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.	•Observations •School budgets for the last three years •Survey results •Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement and retention of professional and support staff •Accreditation Report •Assessments of staffing needs •Interviews	3

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.	•Accreditation Report •Examples of efforts of school leaders to secure necessary material and fiscal resources •Survey results •School schedule •Interviews •Alignment of budget with school purpose and direction •School calendar •Observations	3
4.3	The school maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	•Observations •Records of depreciation of equipment •Interviews •Survey results •Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements •Accreditation Report •Documentation of emergency procedures such as fire drills, evacuation and other emergency procedures. •System for maintenance requests •Maintenance schedules •Safety committee responsibilities, meeting schedules, and minutes	3

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.	•Accreditation Report •Budget related to media and information resource acquisition •Survey results •Interviews •Observations •Data on media and information resources available to students and staff •Schedule of staff availability to assist students and school personnel related to finding and retrieving information •IT Plan	3
4.5	The technology infrastructure supports the school's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	•Interviews •Technology plan and budget to improve technology services and infrastructure •Assessments to inform development of technology plan •Survey results •Policies relative to technology use •Observations •Accreditation Report	4
4.6	The school provides support services to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	•Interviews •Student assessment system for identifying student needs •Accreditation Report •Agreements with school community agencies for student-family support •Survey results •Observations •Social classes and services, e.g., bullying, character education •List of support services available to students	3

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.7	The school provides services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.	•Accreditation Report •List of services available related to counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning •Survey results •Interviews •Budget for counseling, assessment, referral, educational and career planning •Description of IEP process •Observations •Description of referral process	3

Powerful Practices   *Indicator*

1. The school has developed through the Development Office and Annual Fund   4.1
    Program a strong program for fundraising to foster a culture of giving that will
    assure current and future facility improvements and other endeavors to fulfill the
    school's mission and enrich the four pillars.
    Evidence:

    The Graded School Annual Fund Program along with the parallel Leadership
    Giving Campaign that have been developed have already generated substantive
    financial donations, gifts, and pledges. These contributions will greatly contribute
    to the already designated capital reserves committed by the school's Board of
    Directors to the ambitious campus remodeling and expansion project targeted for
    phased completion over the next 3-5 years. The school's Development Office staff
    of a Chief Development Officer and Facilities Project Manager along with with
    assistants have worked effectively and achieved to date notable success in this
    effort, the continued success of which will be critical to the school's realization of
    Phase 1 and subsequent phases of the total expansion project.

    Rationale:

    A robust fund raising and endowment program is an essential component of every
    successful nonprofit institution, and this is even more relevant in a school setting
    where times of rising tuition and the need to ensure short and long-term capital
    investment along with financial sustainability is evident.

2. Graded School's new Master Facility Plan reflects considerable effort and foresight in its elaboration and will assure an appropriate blueprint for increased educational demands, continued enrollment growth, and necessary enhancements to current and future facilities.

4.3

Evidence:

The External Review Team observed that Graded School has developed an ambitious and comprehensive master facility plan in efforts to ensure that its campus undergoes renewal and expansion in order to support 21st century learning. This effort began some three years ago with architectural designs developed through a contracted U.S. based architectural planning firm that visited the campus on several occasions. This same firm has worked with numerous American and international schools around the world and these visits resulted in a phased facilities plan that will see the current campus remodeled and new buildings erected. Additionally, an underground parking lot that will be constructed and greatly alleviate current parking and traffic challenges the school confronts in its current location.

Phase 1 of this facilities plan is anticipated to involve 3-5 years and most of the pre-construction activities have already been completed. The building and architectural plans have been submitted to local city organs and approval is now simply awaiting authorization from city officials to initiate Phase 1 building construction.

Rationale:

A functional, attractive, safe, and well equipped school campus provides an enticing and supportive environment which permits all teachers, support staff, and students to work together in an ambiance that galvanizes education and learning consistent with a school's mission and vision and also keeps pace with changing educational demands.

3. The school's robust technology plan promotes student engagement in active learning, enhances instructional and operational practices, and provides the necessary infrastructure for 21st-century education.

4.5

Evidence:

The administration and staff have deliberately and painstakingly put into place a well researched technology plan and the necessary teaching staff to support Middle School and High School 1:1 student computer device program and I-Pad pilots in first grade as well as the development of an infrastructure that is well on the way to assuring its success. In 2010 this began as a pilot program for all 6th graders and as of August, 2012 666 students from grades 6-12 are using a laptop on campus on a daily basis. The external Review Team witnessed in the classrooms it visited a teaching staff committed to use technological devices in an equitable way to enhance the learning and collaboration of students in their work. The school has made a major commitment to financially support the continued growth of this program. The ICT staff in their technology plan have done a thorough analysis of internet connection services and speed (now with a dedicated line of 100Mbps), server and network infrastructure, security of the system and appropriate backup procedures. They have included the school wide telephone system in this analysis and as of 2012 have 300 PBX terminals and 15 direct lines. Teaching, learning and operating needs have thus been enhanced and the school has also demonstrated leadership in the Latin American region for information and innovation technology.

Rationale:

Schools that effectively use technology have a carefully designed technology plan that is a part of the overall school-improvement plan. Developing a plan for using technology to support education reform means more than providing for the acquisition of computers and software. To be successful, a technology plan must promote meaningful learning and collaboration, provide for the needed professional development and support, and respond flexibly to change.

Opportunities for Improvement   *Indicator*

1. Continue to analyze the balance between instructional time and the wide array of   4.2
    activities that take secondary students out of class.
    Evidence:

    After interviews with students, teachers, administrators and parents, the External
    Review Team heard numerous concerns regarding the conflict between the
    Graded School's philosophy about providing a wide range of student opportunities
    in the areas of arts, music , sports, community service and national and
    international travel options and the need to protect academic instructional time.
    Clearly the intentional offerings of such programs as GIN, Hacia Democracy, High
    School Trip Week, AMIS Music Festivals and other travel opportunities provide an
    array of authentic learning experiences are valued as elements of Graded's 2nd,
    3rd and 4th pillars of Art, Activities and Service. However, High School teachers
    indicate their responsibility to assure the First Pillar of Academic Excellence is at
    risk.

    Rationale:

    Time spent on academic study and extracurricular activity play an important part in
    each student's total development. Quality education is dependent upon striking a
    sensible balance between the time spent on academics and the time spent on
    extracurricular activities.

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.		2.4
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.1	The school establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	•Interviews •Accreditation Report •Documentation or description of evaluation tools/protocols •Survey results •Observations •Brief description of student assessment system including range of data produced from standardized and local assessments on student learning and school performance •Evidence that assessments are reliable and bias free	3

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.2	Professional and support staff continuously collect, analyze, and apply learning from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data about student learning, instruction, program evaluation, and organizational conditions.	•Accreditation Report •Survey results •Written protocols and procedures for data collection and analysis •Examples of use of data to design, implement, and evaluate continuous improvement plans and apply learning •Interviews •List of data sources related to student learning, instruction, program effectiveness, and conditions that support learning •Observations	2
5.3	Professional and support staff are trained in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.	•Policies specific to data training •Professional learning schedule specific to the use of data •Documentation of attendance and training related to data use •Survey results •Observations •Interviews •Accreditation Report •Training materials specific to the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data	2

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.	•Student surveys •Observations •Agendas, minutes of meetings related to analysis of data •Description of process for analyzing data to determine verifiable improvement in student learning •Examples of use of results to evaluate continuous improvement action plans •Interviews •Evidence of student readiness for the next level •Evidence of student growth •Accreditation Report •Evidence of student success at the next level	2
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.	•Minutes of board meetings regarding achievement of student learning goals •Communication plan regarding student learning, conditions that support learning, and achievement of school improvement goals to stakeholders •Accreditation Report •Survey results •Interviews •Sample communications to stakeholders regarding student learning, conditions that support learning, and achievement of school improvement goals •Observations •School quality control procedures for monitoring information about student learning, conditions that support learning, and the achievement of school improvement goals •Executive summaries of student learning reports to stakeholder groups •Graded Gazette Key Performance Indicators	3

Opportunities for Improvement   *Indicator*

1. Establish expanded training opportunities for staff in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of school-wide data across all school divisions and areas of operations.   5.3
Evidence:

   The External Review Team affirmed that although standardized assessment instruments such as MAP tests, IB results, and SAT data are being shared among the faculty, the needs exists for a more systemic process of assuring these assessment instruments are analyzed and evaluated by all faculty to monitor and adjust curriculum and instruction. The school must formalize a consistent and comprehensive process to train staff in collecting and evaluating this data by all staff members to provide a complete picture of student and organizational performance that will guide improvement efforts.

   Rationale:

   By systematically and uniformly training all staff in the collection and analysis of comprehensive student and school performance data, an institution can generate vital information to help make data-driven decisions and establish target goals for future improvement.

Early Learning 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 Early Learning program has resources and provides services that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all children.		3.36
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.	•Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement, and retention of professional and support staff •Interviews •Observations •Policies that require relevant and related trainings •Incentives/recognition program/system •Accreditation Report •School budgets for the last three years •Staff License/certification/qualifications •Assessments of staff needs •Staff compensations/benefits •Personnel evaluation forms •Professional and support staff/child ratios •School Class Size Policy	3

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.2	The school employs qualified Administrators/Directors for each administrative position to support the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program.	•Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement, and retention of professional and support staff •Accreditation Report •Observations •Stakeholder results •Policies that require relevant and related trainings •Incentives/recognition program/system •Staff License/certification/qualifications •Interviews •Staff compensations/benefits •Personnel evaluation forms	4
4.3	The school employs qualified teachers for each professional teaching position to support the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program.	•Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement, and retention of professional and support staff •Interviews •Stakeholder results •Policies that require relevant and related trainings •Incentives/recognition program/system •Observations •Staff License/certification/qualifications •Staff compensations/benefits •Accreditation Report •Personnel evaluation forms	4

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.4	The school employs qualified assistant teachers for each position to support the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program.	•Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement, and retention of professional and support staff •Interviews •Stakeholder results •Policies that require relevant and related trainings •Incentives/recognition program/system •Staff License/certification/qualifications •Observations •Staff compensations/benefits •Personnel evaluation forms •Accreditation Report	4
4.5	The school maintains a class-size and ratio of young children to teachers that support the care and developmentally appropriate learning, growth, and development of young children.	•Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement, and retention of professional and support staff •Interviews •Stakeholder results •Policies that require relevant and related trainings •Observations •Staff compensations/benefits •Accreditation Report •Personnel evaluation forms •Staff to student ratio records	4

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.6	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the early learning school.	•Equipment purchasing and maintenance •Resource materials for training •Examples of efforts of school leaders to secure necessary material and fiscal resources •School schedule •Interviews •Alignment of budget with school purpose and direction •School calendar •Observations •Budget for authorized expenses and activities •Accreditation Report •Itemed/audited budget	3
4.7	The school maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all young children and staff.	•Written health and safety policies •Interviews •Facilities and equipment maintenance records and schedules •Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements •Building inspections record •Accreditation Report •CPR/1st Aid Certification/ health safety trainings •Updated health records •Documentation of emergency procedures such as fire drills and evacuation routes •System for maintenance requests •Observations	3

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.8	The school regularly assesses and maintains all indoor spaces to be accessible to all young children and adults; ventilated, lighted, and temperature-controlled; and the spaces that primarily serve each age-group of young children have direct access to bathroom/washing facilities, sinks, and drinking water.	•Written health and safety policies •Interviews •Observations •Stakeholder results •Facility and equipment specifications •Facilities and equipment maintenance records and schedules •Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements •Accreditation Report •Building and grounds inspections record •Documentation of emergency procedures such as fire drills and evacuation routes •System for maintenance requests	4
4.9	Each classroom/learning space has sufficient usable floor space and size to support the creativity and developmentally appropriate learning, growth, and development of young children; is highly functional for program delivery; and encourages positive staff-to-child relationships.	•Written health and safety policies •Stakeholder results •Observations •Facility and equipment specifications •Facilities and equipment maintenance records and schedules •Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements •Interviews •Accreditation Report •Building and grounds inspections record •Documentation of emergency procedures such as fire drills and evacuation routes •System for maintenance requests	3

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.10	Each classroom/learning space has furniture, equipment, and resources that are safe, clean, well maintained, adaptive, accessible, and developmentally appropriate for the age-group of young children they directly serve; are sufficient in number; and are organized in ways to support appropriate and effective implementation of the program.	•Accreditation Report •Observations •Stakeholder results •Facility and equipment specifications •Facilities and equipment maintenance records and schedules •Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements •Lists of instructional concepts with supporting classroom materials •System for maintenance requests	4
4.11	Indoor and outdoor equipment are safe, available to all young children, are developmentally appropriate for the age-group, have appropriate surfaces to support a variety of types of learning and play, and have impact material under all climbing equipment and swings.	•Written health and safety policies •Stakeholder results •Facility and equipment specifications •Facilities and equipment maintenance records and schedules •Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements •Observations •Lists of instructional concepts with supporting classroom materials •Accreditation Report •System for maintenance requests •Interviews	3
4.12	Each classroom/learning space has multiple learning/interest centers that are organized for independent use by young children, that support the learning activities of the instructional program and the creativity of young children, and that are well equipped with materials supportive of the purpose of each learning/interest center.	•Accreditation Report •Stakeholder results •Observations •Interviews •System for ordering/maintaining sufficient supplies •Lists of instructional concepts with supporting classroom materials •Curriculum standards, guides, expectations	3

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.13	Each classroom/learning space provides all children with safe and comfortable/cozy areas to relax, rest, or sleep that are continuously supervised by adults at all times.	•Observations •Stakeholder results •System for ordering/maintaining sufficient supplies •Lists of instructional concepts with supporting classroom materials •Interviews •Accreditation Report •Curriculum standards, guides, expectations	3
4.14	Children and school personnel use a range of interactive media and information resources that support the educational programs.	•Technology plan •Observations •Assessment and evaluation of technology and media literacy •Survey results •Technology and interactive media inventory •Interviews •Accreditation Report •Data on media and information resources available to staff and children •Examples of interactive media and technology work such as digital portfolios, educational texting, artwork, audio and video recordings, etc.	3

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.15	The technology infrastructure supports the school's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	•Cyber-safety plan; policies and procedures •Technology plan and budget to improve technology services and infrastructure •Accreditation Report •Assessments to inform development of technology plan •Survey results •Hardware and software inventory •Interviews •Observations •Policies relative to technology use •LARK Framework	2
4.16	Each classroom/learning space has displays that are used effectively as a learning tool, are developmentally appropriate for the age-group, attractively presented, appropriate in content, portray the current learning activities, and showcase children's work and creativity.	•Interviews •Accreditation Report •Stakeholder results •System for ordering/maintaining sufficient supplies •Observations •Lists of instructional concepts with supporting classroom materials •Curriculum standards, guides, expectations	3
4.17	The school provides support services to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of young children that are integral to the educational program.	•Examples of child assessments •Assessment system for identifying children's needs •Survey results •Accreditation Report •Intervention services referral •Observations •Interviews •Lists of support services available to students	3

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.18	Each child receives individual personal care by staff members who consistently promote the child's general well-being, nutrition, health, and safety.	•Handbooks, procedures •Observations •Student records indicating personal needs •Stakeholder results •Parent/Staff communications procedures and expectations •Stakeholder communication forms •Accreditation Report •Interviews •School's Veracross system	4
4.19	Arrival and departure routines focus on the care and well-being of each child and encourage a daily exchange of family and school communications regarding the care, well-being, and educational progress of the child.	•Handbooks, procedures •Student records indicating personal needs •Interviews •Stakeholder results •Parent/Staff communications procedures and expectations •Accreditation Report •Observations •Stakeholder communication forms •Health inspection records	3

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.20	The school provides services that support the counseling, assessment, and educational referral needs of all students.	•Program evaluations •Lists of services available related to counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning •Professional development calendar •Accreditation Report •Assessment plan •Demographics •Observations •Parent opportunity information sheets •Budget for counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning •Interviews •Description of referral process	4
4.21	All children, parents, and staff experience an environment of reciprocal respect, trust, and open communication in a fair and just way, respecting the needs and characteristics of each individual, and promoting a sense of community, belonging, ownership, and pride.	•Handbooks, procedures •Observations •Student records indicating personal needs •Interviews •Statement of principles •Parent/Staff communications procedures and expectations •Accreditation Report •Code of conduct •Written policies on positive guidance strategies •Stakeholder feedback results •Stakeholder communications forms	4

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.22	All indoor and outdoor spaces are free from hazards and dangerous circumstances for young children and adults, and adults actively remove and resolve hazardous conditions as they may occur.	•Observations •Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements •Accident records and reports •Accreditation Report •Interviews •Safety handbooks, guidelines, procedures, expectations •Observations of student and adult behaviors concerning safety practices •Stakeholder feedback results •Health inspection records	3

Powerful Practices	*Indicator*

1. The Early Learning program provides a most effective optimal learning experience through a highly qualified staff, developmentally appropriate spaces and resources to meet individual needs, and high standards of excellence to support the school's mission.
       4.3

   Evidence:

   Well-trained administrative staff members hold appropriate degrees and credentials and have over 3 years experience, as verified by a review of their documentation on file in the Human Resources office. Additionally, all teachers as well as all assistant teachers in the Early Childhood program hold appropriate degrees and credentials and have verifiable experience in the area of early childhood education, and received training in the Montessori method. as revealed during a review of their documentation. Every classroom in the early learning division is also amply equipped with materials and resources, there is a pervasive spirit of collaboration on the part of all involved in this division, and a firm commitment to the Montessori method. The External Review team commends the pre-primary instructional and support staff for their fostering of an exceptional climate of trust and respect and advocacy for student success.

   Rationale:

   A competent, committed, and enthusiastic instructional staff coupled with student centered programs and extensive instructional resources will continue to provide the Graded early childhood student with a strong social and emotional foundation, academic readiness, and successful practical life abilities.

2. The school employs a highly qualified and dedicated assistant teaching staff who have been trained in the Montessori model of instruction and whose support of the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program is clearly evident.
       4.4

   Evidence:

   The pre-primary division delivers a Montessori education program for the early learning program (K3, K4, K5 and T1). The teacher assistants all hold a a high school diploma or higher and receive ongoing support through continuous training.

   Rationale:
   Working with children at a tender age of three to five requires thorough understanding of the physical, emotional and social needs of the young students in order to provide the appropriate structure and support for their developmental process.

3. The school is careful to maintain a teacher-to-student ratio that supports developmentally appropriate learning and growth of young children and that aligns with expectations for class size in the Montessori educational program.
    Evidence:

    As evidenced by classroom observations, the school's written policy regarding class size, and interviews with the administration, the school makes purposeful decisions about the size of the Early Childhood groups, maintaining optimal teacher-to-student ratios so that the size of each class will support the Montessori method and provide exemplary compliance with this Standard Indicator 4.5.

    Rationale:

    Optimal class sizes at the Early Childhood level provide the foundation for learning, growth, and student success in the Montessori learning program.

4.8

4. The school provides ample, well-maintained ,and ventilated indoor spaces that are accessible to all young children and adults.
    Evidence:

    The External Review Team observed through multiple classroom visits that each room has its own bathroom/washing facilities, sinks, and access to drinking water. Each classroom also has the capability to provide a temperature-controlled environment with ceiling fans and windows.

    Rationale:

    Well-planned and structured classrooms allow for a safe and comfortable learning environment that is most appropriate for the young learner.

4.10

5. The early learning program rooms are well equipped with substantial furniture, multiple learning equipment and resources that are accessible and developmentally appropriate for the age-group, meet individual student needs, and are in excellent condition.
    Evidence:

    Graded School's Montessori classrooms provide an exemplary environment with a wealth of learning materials that are easily accessible to students on shelves, child-sized furniture and kitchen tools, and an overall excellent and use of instructional space.

    Rationale:

    An effective early childhood environment is one characterized by well equipped learning spaces and is focused on and nurtures students' independence, choice, and autonomy.

6. Graded's Pre-Primary instructional and support staff provide all children in the early learning program high levels of individual personal care, are keen observers and providers of their individual interest, and consistently promote their general well-being, nutrition, health, and safety.   4.18

Evidence:

The instructional environment in Graded's pre-primary division is exemplified by dedicated and personal care by all staff members, which includes teachers and support staff, the nutritionist, nurse, OLC staff, and maintenance crew. All classrooms are clean, well equipped, and suited to the young child with every room having age-appropriate bathrooms, sinks, child-sized furniture and culinary utensils, and ample space for rest and relaxation.

Rationale:

Caring attention exhibited by staff and an appropriate early learning environment serve to maximize the intellectual potential of the children and provide a foundation for the development of emotional security.

7. The early learning program implements a clearly defined process to assess and evaluate the needs of each student and provides the appropriate counseling to more effectively meet the needs of all young children.   4.20

Evidence:

Graded's Montessori program provides clear evidence of a supportive, child-centered environment. This was observed through strong preschool OLC support services, a pre-primary assessment calendar, and a lower school referral process. There is also an ample budget to support and provide the resources identified as being best to support student's success.

Rationale:

A student that spends the day in an effectively designed child-centered environment, will be physically, emotionally, aesthetically, and intellectually nurtured.

8. The school's Montessori program staff exhibit a consistent effort to create a welcoming environment of acceptance and respect for all children, parents and staff, creating a climate of reciprocal respect, trust and open communication and opportunity to model appropriate manners and social behaviors.

4.21

Evidence:

The pre-primary division at the Graded School is a most established program with staff members representing many years of instructional experience and strong familiarity and allegiance to the Montessori model of education. Several of these teachers who been at the school for extended periods of employment and have thus acquired a strong professional development and keen ability to recognize student's interest and needs. They also have worked with not only their own their students but also their siblings over the years and thus have an active partnership with the parents. They exhibit a holistic approach to their instructional duties and work to provide a personalized learning opportunity for each student and involvement of their parents in this process.

Rationale:

A caring and responsive environment and caregiver attitude on the part of the instructional team provides a positive climate for young children that will impact not only emotional security but also many aspects of cognitive development. Children who feel secure and supported will experiment, try new things, and express their ideas.

Opportunities for Improvement

Indicator

1. Involve the early learning stakeholders to further develop the school-wide technology plan so that it's inclusive of the diverse teaching, learning and operational needs of the early learning program.
    Evidence:

4.15

The school has implemented a robust school-wide Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Plan but has yet to fully engage the pre-primary teachers in the dialogue on how to ensure the integration of technology into the curriculum of the pre-primary curriculum.

Rationale:

Early learning children bring a vast range of experiences, knowledge and skills to the learning setting and context. Through making decisions about how and when to use information and communication technologies, and accessing the most applicable tools to explore and represent their learning, their teachers are empowered and valued as co-constructors of their meaning and knowledge.

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

Environments	*Level*
A. Equitable Learning Environment	3.07
B. High Expectations Environment	3.09
C. Supportive Learning Environment	3.31
D. Active Learning Environment	3.4
E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment	3.24
F. Well-Managed Learning Environment	3.16
G. Digital Learning Environment	2.69

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.

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

The External Review Team conducted the visit to The Graded School during the period of April 7-10, 2013. The school staff demonstrated readiness for the visit and provided the Team with multiple opportunities to interview stakeholder groups. The school's self-assessment instrument, assurances, self-study report, and executive summary outlined evidence and supporting material that reflected a transparent and honest self-appraisal of a school-wide commitment to the review process.

During the 3-day visit, the External Review Team spoke with 165 members of the school community. This included face-to-face interviews with specific school administrators, directors, and coordinators in a variety of school departments and divisions, as well as multiple groups of representative community stakeholders. In summary, the Team met with 9 Board Members, 12 members of the senior leadership team, 8 members of the administrative operations group, 25 staff members who served as Accreditation Committee Co-chairs and Representatives, 15 parents representing all school levels, 46 faculty and support staff from the three school divisions, and 31 students representing the lower, middle, and high schools.

Demonstrative of his appreciation of the importance of the self-assessment process and the visit of the External Review team, the Board President, who was traveling during the visit, made arrangements to participate via skype from his location in London, England, in the scheduled Board meeting on the first day of the accreditation visit. This was most appreciated by the External Review Team and provided evidence of the cooperative partnership observed between the Board of Directors and school administration.

The team was provided unencumbered access to all areas of the campus as well as all desired school documents. The school exhibited great effort in assuring that all school evidence documentation was made available online through Google docs. This information included the School Profile, Board Policy Documents, School Improvement Plan, Facilities Plan, Student and Faculty Handbooks, Information and Communication Technology Plan, School Curriculum, among other documents.   Each of the individuals from the school administration, business and admissions, human resources, development office, technology department, faculty and staff, student body and parents with whom the team met was most open and candid in their responses and left the team with a clear confirmation that the entire school was committed to the self-assessment process.

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 External Review Team identified several central themes that emerged from the identified Powerful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement.

Powerful Practices:

First, the community of the Graded School demonstrated a committed and enthusiastic engagement in the self-assessment process and its process of continuous improvement. This effort was observed in a climate of transparency as evidenced by the data collected from all documents presented and reviewed, all on-site interviews conducted with stakeholders, as well as review of stakeholder survey results. The self-assessment process also clearly saw involvement from a cross section of all stakeholders in the school community.

Secondly, it was evident that an inclusive process took place to review, revise, and communicate a strong and unified purpose and to clarify the school's direction for the future. A review of survey data and meeting notes, corroborated by interviews with stakeholders, indicated that input from the entire community was gathered and thoroughly analyzed. Several levels of committee level work took place over a period of many months and permitted extensive, thoughtful, and dynamic conversation around the analysis of the data, and about the shared values and beliefs that emerged from the review. This effort resulted in a Purpose statement clearly aligned with the school's Mission and showing commitment to high expectations for student learning and success.

Third, It was also clear that the school has undergone many positive improvements over the last three years. There is a uniform commitment and demonstrated high degree of collaboration on the part of the current school governance and administrative team to ensure the school's future is characterized by continued growth and effective long-term strategic planning to provide educational excellence, curriculum and program relevance, and operational, financial, and investment efficiency. Formalization of processes and documentation to stabilize the foundation has been a priority. Additionally, the Learning Leadership Team and School Board are currently working on defining what the future of Informational Technology will be at the school with respect to 21st century needs and placing emphasis on assuring that the school's technology needs are continually maintained and upgraded. Currently the school is piloting an i-PAD literacy program in grade one and has 1:1 device program in the Middle and High Schools.

Fourth, the school has elaborated an extensive Master Facilities Plan in order to permit the current dated campus to be remodeled and modernized and better aligned to the school's mission and vision for the future. This process has been a most extensive one conducted very thoroughly over several months with an outside planning and architectural firm contracted to oversee the project and a multi-phased construction plan elaborated. The plan will include renovations to current facilities as well as new buildings being erected to permit meeting anticipated enrollment growth. Along with this has been an ambitious Graded Fund Campaign to assure capital reserves to complete phase 1 initiation and subsequent ongoing phase completion financial needs. A very committed professional staff in the

Development Office is overseeing this effort and the school has already realized significant funds in gifts and pledges.

Fifth, another area of demonstration of notable powerful practices was Graded School's Pre-Primary and Montessori program. The External Review Team observed through classroom visits that the early learning program teachers create a most welcoming and nurturing environment for all children and parents.   Teachers and assistants also interact with respect and consistently modeled appropriate behavior. The staff is also very committed with many of them representing some of the longest standing members of the entire school faculty and with a strong knowledge base as well as support of the Montessori model.   The classrooms offer a friendly and inviting environment and parents are regularly invited to the classrooms to celebrate learning.

Opportunities for Improvement:

Five central themes emerged and when successfully addressed will provide clear direction for the school's continued improvement efforts.

The first essential theme is related to the school's self-assessment process. Although well-planned and allowing all voices to be heard with a clear commitment to continuous improvement, there is evidence, as confirmed by the school leadership, that ongoing improvement efforts could be more collaboratively and widely developed. These efforts could also be more uniformly shared with the entire community so they are aware of the avenues through which they can express their opinions and each phase of the decision-making process as it occurs.

The second theme is related to curriculum alignment and better school-wide articulation tied to application of data assessment. Administrators confirmed that they are still working on assessments and curriculum and that a foundation is now in place but there is still need to to continue to put structures in place for clear accountability. A five-year curriculum review cycle process is currently being undertaken with school-wide standards for content and skills being implemented along with new grade descriptors that are aligned with student mastery expectations. In this review process, the school is also taking careful measures to ensure that the curriculum is in line with best practices.

Third, a review of the evidence found in school publications and the academic management system, verified that Graded collects a wide range of data about student learning. These data include SAT results, IB scores, MAP tests, and DRA outcomes that provide both an annual snapshot of student performance as well as robust trend data that allow the school to evaluate longitudinal program improvements. Although the school has engaged in the use of some of these data to inform decisions in teaching and learning such as the analysis of grade-level reading lexiles to review novel selection and the evaluation of testing results to examine math and science sequencing, the current scope of data used reflects pockets of practice rather than a formalized, systematized process of data analysis and evaluation across all building levels and subjects.

Fourth, due to the limited data analyses, teachers have not uniformly used testing data in their planning. Tests have been administered but a comprehensive system to compile and analyze the data is as yet still

not in place. However, teachers, administrators, and specialists do access the NWEA web site to identify individual student scores to determine those needing additional focus. As the school continues in the process of documenting and expanding its use of data across all areas of student learning as well as fully implements its plans for a task force to work on assessment, all personnel will be better positioned to leverage the available data and maximize its potential for improving student learning and teaching practices. The school's commitment to future training of staff in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data, as part of its school improvement plan, will also help build continued greater capacity for achieving present and future improvement goals.

Fifth, in the other key area of using data for gauging school effectiveness, the school has developed some measures that allow for data-driven decision making. The Board of Directors and chief administrator collect and review an extensive set of financial and operational data that have clearly informed strategic decisions at the school in areas such as admissions, school growth, and master facilities. Beyond these top-management data and the annual review of survey data, the External Review Team found limited evidence that documented a systematic process for generating data to evaluate the effectiveness of other non-academic school operations in order to target improvement objectives. Interviews with stakeholder groups, including a selected group of parents, suggested the need for more extensive communication related to student performance and organizational effectiveness to provide greater assurance of verifiable improvement over time.

An expanded communication process that highlights more comprehensive school-wide data would allow the school to engage all stakeholders in developing, monitoring, and celebrating school improvement efforts and results.

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.

Members of the External Review Team evaluated the learning environment on the Graded School campus by observing classrooms and the general educational setting throughout each school division including the Pre-Primary program, the Lower School, the Middle School, and the High School.

A total of 33 twenty-minute formal visits to classrooms were conducted as well as several additional walk-throughs.   The visits were made across a wide sampling of subject areas and grade levels and included both in and out class settings. ELEOT revealed the following "highest to lowest" ranking in terms of the learning environment ratings:

1) Active Learning Environment 3.4
2) Supportive Learning Environment 3.3
3) Well-Managed Learning Environment 3.2
4) Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment 3.2

5) High Expectations Environment 3.1
6) Equitable Learning Environment 3.1
7) Digital Learning Environment 2.7

These ratings revealed generally very well managed and nurturing learning environments observed by the team members with students actively involved and eager to be in the classroom, demonstrating a commitment to respecting classroom procedures, willingly complying with all established policies, exhibiting care and maintenance of their learning materials, and showing positive levels of respect towards one another and their teachers.

A common assessment by team members was that all students observed demonstrated learning to be a positive experience, had ample opportunity to be engaged in their learning, and that they were involved in rigorous coursework and classroom involvement. The extensive array of course offerings and extracurricular activities available to students was also confirmed by all students as one of the strengths of the school's educational program. This wide selection of opportunities was commented on by more than one student as being one of the principal reasons they were glad to be studying at the Graded School. Classes visited in the performing arts center an observation of students in their classes, i.e. International Baccalaureate (IB) Visual Arts, band, photography among other areas clearly showed evidence of the school achieving success in promoting opportunities for individual excellence.

Also notable, and reflective of the school's commitment to assuring students are being provided provided 21st century skills was the significant number of computers being used by students on campus and the observation in many classes of assignments requiring online access to the school's expanding technology network. The BYOD program received strong accolades from all students who were interviewed during or after classes.

Transition between classes and activities was seen to be smooth with students in the hallways walking respectively to their next class and conscious of the need to keep noise levels down so as not to interfere with others in nearby classrooms.

A supportive learning environment was also evident through a personalized attention from the instructional staff and frequent confirmation from multiple students that they felt they could count upon the help from any array of staff members, be this their principal, classroom teacher, IB Coordinator, counselor, librarian, P.E. teacher, among other staff members.

During both off-site and on-site work, the six-member External Review Team conducted a extensive review of the School's Executive Summary, Self-Assessment, School Improvement and Strategic Planning efforts, ICT Plan, Assurances compliance, diagnostic data, and stakeholder feedback. The two co-chairs of the Self-Assessment Committee as well as the Chairs and members of each of the Standard Committees exhibited commendable professional performance, clearly evident resolve to involve all members of the instructional and administrative support staff, and provided documentation in a timely manner.

The team conducted meetings and interviews with a wide representation of all community constituents

and affirmed that the entire school community displayed an active participation and engagement in the self-assessment process as well as a commitment to assisting the school in continued school improvement. Particularly notable was the work of the current Learning Leadership Team in ensuring the involvement of all staff and community stakeholders. A definite culture of a quality educational environment was observed with a real pride in the school exhibited by all community members and a resolve to ensure all students continue to be provided multiple learning opportunities.

Appreciation is extended to the entire Graded School community for its hosting of the External Review Team and the support of all those who were a part of the welcome, scheduling and overall organization, and closing reception. Even the weather cooperated with Sao Paulo skies being blue and sunny throughout the visit.

It is the team's conclusion that Graded School be recommended to be granted full, continuing, accreditation status pending further review and final affirmation by the AdvancED Accreditation Committee.

Required Actions

1. Formalize the process for data analysis and evaluation to ensure that all professional and support staff systematically use multiple measures, including comparative and trend data, to demonstrate verifiable improvement in student learning, organizational effectiveness, and the impact of school improvement goals.

    Primary Indicator or Assurance: 5.2

Evidence:

After reviewing the online assessment system, electronic evidence files, and self-study report as well as conducting interviews with teachers, administrators, and parents, the External Review Team found limited evidence that documented a school-wide process to formalize the analysis and use of comprehensive data across the academic and operational areas of the school. Although the school has engaged in some focused efforts to begin fully utilizing MAP results and survey data along with departmental assessments to create improvement plans, the lack of a formalized process for analyzing and using a broad range of comparative and trend data currently restricts the school's ability to evaluate the success of these types of interventions on overall program improvement. In the review of data within non-academic operations, the school has also taken some important steps toward evaluating organizational effectiveness through Board Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and the annual analysis of admissions data, yet the need exists to extend this type of systematic process for the evaluation of all operations to provide a complete picture of performance that will inform future continuous improvement efforts.

Rationale:

Through the systematic collection and analysis of comprehensive data across both student performance and organizational effectiveness indicators, a school can leverage this critical information to make data-driven decisions and create measurable goals for improving the following areas: 1) school-wide student learning performance aligned with the school's mission and key pillars, 2) effectiveness in administrative operations, and 3) action plans and their impact on target goals for school improvement.

2. Develop and implement a formalized process for routinely communicating with school personnel and key stakeholder groups about efforts to improve organizational operations, measure program effectiveness, and evaluate student performance and readiness for success at the next level.

Primary Indicator or Assurance: 5.4

Evidence:

Although the External Review Team observed some key assessment data being shared among the faculty, the need exists to structure more collaborative efforts among all school personnel in the effective use of available information to inform changes in curriculum and instruction. The school demonstrated some evidence of this continuous process of communicating and evaluation results in the provision of MAP workshops for staff, but a more extensive analysis of student achievement results and school-wide exchange of data will be necessary to gauge verifiable improvements related to proposed action plans. The administration and staff must also employ this information in the public monitoring of overall school improvement efforts and identification of areas of strength and needed improvements.

Rationale:

A formalized communication process that shares comprehensive information with all school personnel and stakeholders allows for school-wide participation and support in the development of priorities for improvement as well as builds greater commitment toward accomplishing target goals and in turn ensuring verifiable student readiness for and success at the next level.

3. Establish a tracking methodology and targeted funding for the maintenance of the present school facilities to assure that during the process of design and construction of the phased Master Facility Plan and remodeling of the school, the existing buildings and grounds are maintained to provide an environment conducive to working and learning.

Primary Indicator or Assurance: 4.2

Evidence:

After reviewing the documentation provided in the self-study report along with conducting interviews with the Head of Maintenance, the contracted Civil Engineer, the Development Officer, teachers, students and parents as well as observations made during the Facility Walk Through, the External Review team found a common concern that the laudable efforts of fund raising for a modern redesigned Graded campus is impacting the preservation and maintenance of the present facilities.

Although the school has a sufficiently manned maintenance department with assigned duties and responsibilities and a new Head of Maintenance, the External Review team did not find evidence that there was a plan of action to systematically maintain the existing facilities. Furthermore the External Review Team did find evidence of mold, drains with standing water, missing tiles and trim work on some facades and a need for general painting and repair.

Rationale:

Where measures are in place that allow for the continuous tracking of the conditions of facilities, a school can clearly provide an inviting, safe, clean and healthy environment for all students and staff.

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.

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.