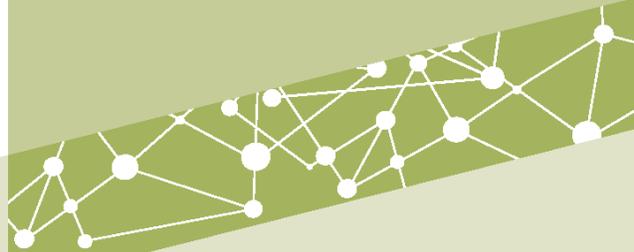April 1-3, 2019

AdvancED®
Engagement
Review Report

AdvancED® Performance Accreditation

» **Results for:**
Educational Service Unit #9
5807 Osborne Drive West
Hastings, Nebraska 68901

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AdvancED Performance Accreditation and the Engagement Review

Accreditation is pivotal to leveraging education quality and continuous improvement. Using a set of rigorous research-based standards, the accreditation process examines the whole institution—the program, the cultural context and the community of stakeholders—to determine how well the parts work together to meet the needs of learners. Through the AdvancED Accreditation Process, highly skilled and trained Engagement Review Teams gather first-hand evidence and information pertinent to evaluating an institution's performance against the research-based AdvancED Performance Standards. Using these Standards, Engagement Review Teams assess the quality of learning environments to gain valuable insights and target improvements in teaching and learning. AdvancED provides Standards that are tailored for all education providers so that the benefits of accreditation are universal across the education community.

Through a comprehensive review of evidence and information, our experts gain a broad understanding of institution quality. Using the Standards, the review team provides valuable feedback to institutions which helps to focus and guide each institution's improvement journey. Valuable evidence and information from other stakeholders, including students, also are obtained through interviews, surveys, and additional activities.

AdvancED Standards Diagnostic Results

The AdvancED Performance Standards Diagnostic is used by the Engagement Review Team to evaluate the institution's effectiveness based on AdvancED's Performance Standards. The diagnostic consists of three components built around each of the three Domains: **Leadership Capacity**, **Learning Capacity** and **Resource Capacity**. Results are reported within four ranges identified by the colors. The results for the three Domains are presented in the tables that follow.

Color	Rating	Description
Red	Needs Improvement	Identifies key areas that need more focused improvement efforts
Yellow	Emerging	Represents areas to enhance and extend current improvement efforts
Green	Meets Expectations	Pinpoints quality practices that meet the Standards
Blue	Exceeds Expectations	Demonstrates noteworthy practices producing clear results that exceed expectations

Leadership Capacity Domain

The capacity of leadership to ensure an institution's progress toward its stated objectives is an essential element of organizational effectiveness. An institution's leadership capacity includes the fidelity and commitment to its purpose and direction; the effectiveness of governance and leadership to enable the institution to realize its stated objectives; the ability to engage and involve stakeholders in meaningful and productive ways; and the capacity to implement strategies that improve learner and educator performance.

Leadership Capacity Standards		Rating
1.1	The organization commits to a purpose statement that defines beliefs about learning including the expectations for the organization.	Meets Expectations

Leadership Capacity Standards		Rating
1.2	Stakeholders collectively demonstrate actions to ensure the achievement of the organization's purpose.	Meets Expectations
1.3	The organization engages in a continuous improvement process that produces evidence, including measurable results of improving professional practice and organizational effectiveness.	Meets Expectations
1.4	The governing authority establishes and ensures adherence to policies that are designed to support organizational effectiveness.	Exceeds Expectations
1.5	The governing authority adheres to a code of ethics and functions within defined roles and responsibilities.	Exceeds Expectations
1.6	Leaders implement staff supervision and evaluation processes to improve professional practice and organizational effectiveness.	Meets Expectations
1.7	Leaders implement operational processes and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness.	Meets Expectations
1.8	Leaders engage stakeholders to support the achievement of the organization's purpose and direction.	Meets Expectations
1.9	The organization provides experiences that cultivate and improve leadership effectiveness.	Meets Expectations
1.10	Leaders collect and analyze a range of feedback data from multiple stakeholder groups to inform decision-making that results in improvement.	Exceeds Expectations

Learning Capacity Domain

The impact of teaching and learning on student achievement and success is the primary expectation of every institution. An effective learning culture is characterized by positive and productive teacher/learner relationships; high expectations and standards; a challenging and engaging curriculum; quality instruction and comprehensive support that enable all learners to be successful; and assessment practices (formative and summative) that monitor and measure learner progress and achievement. Moreover, a quality institution evaluates the impact of its learning culture, including all programs and support services and adjusts accordingly.

Learning Capacity Standards		Rating
2.1	The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation, and collaborative problem-solving.	Meets Expectations
2.2	The organization identifies and develops programs and services based on a data-driven needs assessment of its institutions.	Meets Expectations
2.3	The organization implements programs and services that are equitable, relevant, and aligned to research and best practice to meet the needs of its institutions.	Meets Expectations
2.4	The organization implements instructional strategies that ensure adult learners' needs are met and that learners are engaged in deeper learning experiences.	Meets Expectations
2.5	The organization gathers, analyzes, and uses formative and summative data to improve student learning and the delivery of programs and services.	Emerging
2.6	The organization implements a process to continuously assess programs, services and organizational conditions to improve organizational effectiveness.	Emerging

Resource Capacity Domain

The use and distribution of resources support the stated mission of the institution. Institutions ensure that resources are distributed and utilized equitably so the needs of all learners are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes support for professional learning for all staff. The institution examines the allocation and use of resources to ensure appropriate levels of funding, sustainability, organizational effectiveness, and increased student learning.

Resource Capacity Standards		Rating
3.1	The organization plans and delivers professional learning to improve the learning environment and organizational effectiveness.	Exceeds Expectations
3.2	The organization's professional learning structure and expectations promote collaboration and collegiality to improve organizational effectiveness.	Emerging
3.3	The organization provides induction, mentoring, and coaching programs that ensure all staff members have the knowledge and skills to improve organizational effectiveness.	Emerging
3.4	The organization attracts and retains qualified personnel who support the organization's purpose and direction.	Exceeds Expectations
3.5	The organization integrates digital resources into teaching, learning, and operations to improve professional practice and organizational effectiveness, as well as to support learning and program delivery.	Meets Expectations
3.6	The organization provides access to information resources and materials to support its organizations, programs, and services.	Meets Expectations
3.7	The organization demonstrates strategic resource management that includes long-range planning and use of resources in support of the organization's purpose and direction.	Meets Expectations
3.8	The organization allocates human, material, and fiscal resources in alignment with the organization's identified needs and priorities to improve organizational effectiveness.	Meets Expectations

Assurances

Assurances are statements accredited institutions must confirm they are meeting. The Assurance statements are based on the type of institution and the responses are confirmed by the Accreditation Engagement Review Team. Institutions are expected to meet all Assurances and are expected to correct any deficiencies in unmet Assurances.

Assurances Met		
YES	NO	If No, List Unmet Assurances By Number Below
X		

AdvancED Continuous Improvement System

AdvancED defines continuous improvement as "an embedded behavior rooted in an institution's culture that constantly focuses on conditions, processes, and practices to improve teaching and learning." The AdvancED Continuous Improvement System (CIS) provides a systemic fully integrated solution to help institutions map out and navigate a successful improvement journey. In the same manner that educators are expected to understand the unique needs of every learner and tailor the education experience to drive student success, every institution must be empowered to map out and embrace their unique improvement journey. AdvancED expects institutions

to use the results and the analysis of data from various interwoven components for the implementation of improvement actions to drive education quality and improved student outcomes. While each improvement journey is unique, the journey is driven by key actions.

The findings of the Engagement Review Team will be organized by the Levels of Impact within i3: Initiate, Improve and Impact. The organization of the findings is based upon the ratings from the Standards Diagnostic and the i3 Levels of Impact.

Initiate

The first phase of the improvement journey is to **Initiate** actions to cause and achieve better results. The elements of the Initiate phase are defined within the Levels of Impact of Engagement and Implementation. Engagement is the level of involvement and frequency stakeholders are engaged in the desired practices, processes, or programs within the institution. Implementation is the degree to which the desired practices, processes, or programs are monitored and adjusted for quality and fidelity of implementation. Standards identified within Initiate should become the focus of the institution's continuous improvement journey to move toward the collection, analysis and use of data to measure the results of engagement and implementation. A focus on enhancing the capacity of the institution in meeting the identified Standards has the greatest potential impact on improving student performance and organizational effectiveness.

Improve

The second phase of the improvement journey is to gather and evaluate the results of actions to **Improve**. The elements of the **Improve** phase are defined within the Levels of Impact of Results and Sustainability. Results represents the collection, analysis, and use of data and evidence to demonstrate attaining the desired result(s). Sustainability is results achieved consistently to demonstrate growth and improvement over time (minimum of three years). Standards identified within Improve are those in which the institution is using results to inform their continuous improvement processes and using results over time to demonstrate the achievement of goals. The institution should continue to analyze and use results to guide improvements in student achievement and organizational effectiveness.

Impact

The third phase of achieving improvement is **Impact** where desired practices are deeply entrenched. The elements of the **Impact** phase are defined within the Level of Impact of Embeddedness. Embeddedness is the degree to which the desired practices, processes, or programs are deeply ingrained in the culture and operation of the institution. Standards identified within Impact are those in which the institution has demonstrated ongoing growth and improvement over time and has embedded the practices within the culture of the institution. Institutions should continue to support and sustain these practices that are yielding results in improving student achievement and organizational effectiveness.

Findings

The findings in this report represent the degree to which the Accreditation Standards are effectively implemented in support of the learning environment and the mission of the institution. Standards which are identified in the **Initiate** phase of practice are considered Priorities for Improvement that must be addressed by the institution to retain accreditation. Standards which are identified in the **Improve** phase of practice are considered Opportunities for Improvement that the institution should consider. Standards which are identified in the **Impact** phase of practice are considered Effective Practices within the institution.

I3 Rubric Levels	STANDARDS
Initiate Priorities for Improvement	
Improve Opportunities for Improvement	Standards: 2.5, 2.6 Standards: 3.2, 3.3
Impact Effective Practices	Standards: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10 Standards: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 Standards: 3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8

Accreditation Status and Index of Education Quality® (IEQ®)

AdvancED will review the results of the Accreditation Engagement Review to make a final determination concerning accreditation status, including the appropriate next steps for your institution in response to these findings. AdvancED provides the Index of Education Quality® (IEQ®) as a holistic measure of overall performance based on a comprehensive set of standards and review criteria. A formative tool for improvement, it identifies areas of success as well as areas in need of focus. The IEQ is comprised of the Standards Diagnostic ratings from the three Domains: 1) Leadership Capacity; 2) Learning Capacity; and 3) Resource Capacity. The IEQ results are reported on a scale of 100 to 400 and provides information about how the institution is performing compared to expected criteria. Institutions should review the IEQ in relation to the Findings from the review in the areas of Initiate, Improve and Impact. An IEQ score below 250 indicates that the institution has several areas within the Initiate level and should focus their improvement efforts on those Standards within the Initiate level. An IEQ in the range of 225-300 indicates that the institution has several Standards within the Improve level and is using results to inform continuous improvement and demonstrate sustainability. An IEQ of 275 and above indicates the institution is beginning to reach the Impact level and is engaged in practices that are sustained over time and are becoming ingrained in the culture of the institution.

Below is the average (range) of all AIN institutions evaluated for accreditation in the last five years. The range of the annual AIN IEQ average is presented to enable you to benchmark your results with other institutions in the network.

Institution IEQ	333.75	**AIN 5 Year IEQ Range**	278.34 – 283.33

Insights from the Review

The Engagement Review Team engaged in professional discussions and deliberations about the processes, programs and practices within the institution to arrive at the findings of the team. These findings are organized around themes guided by the evidence, examples of programs and practices and provide direction for the institution's continuous improvement efforts. The Insights from the Review narrative should provide contextualized information from the team deliberations and provide information about the team's analysis of the practices, processes, and programs of the institution from the levels of Initiate, Improve, and Impact. The Insights from the Review narrative should provide next steps to guide the improvement journey of the institution in its efforts to improve the quality of educational opportunities for all learners. The findings are aligned to research-based criteria designed to improve student learning and organizational effectiveness. The feedback provided in

the Accreditation Engagement Review Report will assist the institution in reflecting on its current improvement efforts and to adapt and adjust their plans to continuously strive for improvement.

The Educational Service Unit #9 (ESU #9) went through the previous engagement review in 2014. The current administration had only been in place a few years at the time of the review and the report contained many improvements to put the institution on a continuous improvement journey. Over the past five years, the same administration has remained in place and instituted numerous initiatives addressing the suggestions from the previous report. During this time period, with a strong leadership committed to continuous improvement, ESU #9 has made tremendous progress toward embedding many aspects of continuous improvement into the culture of the institution.

The Engagement Review Team identified five themes from the review that correlate to a continuous improvement process for enhancing the agency goals. These themes present strengths and opportunities for agency leaders to continue the improvement journey. The five themes regard formalization of processes, communication, the use of data, distributed leadership, and the promotion of a positive culture.

The agency follows a set of board policies that help guide the institution. Formalizing some of the processes that are occurring, and are illustrative of an effective service agency, may benefit ESU #9 in the future. The agency leadership has made it a priority to collect numerous forms of data. These data sources include numerous surveys and annual needs assessments to stakeholders. Leaders have also worked to increase communication through various social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and the agency website. There were some indications of internal feedback, but the internal feedback appeared limited in use and/or had limited analysis. Institutional leadership has also taken on the initiative to create a service framework, based on the Danielson Model, for the districts being served. This service framework is in its infancy but has the potential to show the impact the institution is having on student learning in the districts being served. Current board policies reflect typical policies found in an organization such as ESU #9. These policies do not consider day-to-day activities such as gathering and analyzing data. In addition, reports to the board do not include any data presentations other than duties of the administrator regarding internal communications and membership data. Agency leaders can better gauge the impact they are having on the districts being served and the student learning happening within those districts by formalizing their processes for determining how to gather and analyze data. The results can then be reported to the board on an annual basis. Utilizing the service framework to guide this formalization may also benefit institutional leaders in these endeavors.

Agency leaders have worked hard since the previous AdvancED engagement review to improve communication and the collection of data. Communication has evolved in a positive direction over the past few years. Agency leaders administer annual needs assessments to leaders of the fourteen districts being served. The results of these annual needs assessments help provide agency administration of potential professional development activities to provide in the upcoming year. In addition to the annual needs' assessments, agency leaders also provide satisfaction surveys subsequent to each professional development activity delivered. Even so, internal communication appears to be intermittent, especially concerning contract employees working within individual districts and not commuting to ESU #9. Through interviews with agency leaders and other agency personnel, the Engagement Review Team discovered limited communications between these two groups. In addition, professional development opportunities, tied directly to the annual needs' assessments, appear to be the primary source for information regarding opportunities provided to the districts served. This reactionary response to professional development limits the ability of the agency to impact student learning in the districts served and

may limit the capacity of the agency to serve the districts. Through enhanced communication efforts, the agency staff may be able to pro-actively identify opportunities for future professional development activities for all departments within the agency.

As previously stated, data are an integral part of the day-to-day activities of ESU #9. The data have been accumulated for the past four years regarding numerous activities. Nonetheless, the Engagement Review Team did not see an analysis of the data presented. New sources for data to aid in the improvement of the system may be found in enhanced communication efforts and the formalization of many processes. These data can be aggregated a number of ways, and by adding analysis of the data, the agency will enable leaders to make more informed decisions about the impact the agency is having on districts served and student learning. An annual report to the board, from each department concerning their programs would also aid in establishing clearer communication efforts. As a final note on the use of data, agency leaders are in the process of instituting the Service Implementation Process and Log (SIMPL) program that will track all the activities being undertaken at the agency and house these activities in a single software program.

The Engagement Team noted two distinct themes that have emerged since the last AdvancED visit that are at the heart of any continuous improvement journey - distributed leadership and a positive culture that advances a growth mindset. The current administration has made a priority of embedding a shared leadership model within the agency. This was evident through interviews with the board, the administration, the department chairs, and the program chairs. The Engagement Review Team also noted all internal stakeholders had presentations indicating where they were on the improvement journey during the overview presentation. The embracement of a distributed leadership model has allowed employees of ESU #9 to have the freedom to share their thoughts and take ownership of their work within the agency. Distributed leadership has become ingrained in the culture of the institution on a day-to-day basis.

 The agency has developed a culture based on a positive, growth mindset. Since their last AdvancED visit, the leadership at the agency moved from an outdated, dilapidated building into a very modern office building. This change in sites reflects the change in positive attitudes that have occurred at ESU #9 and are a direct result of the work done by the leadership team. The team heard numerous comments from stakeholders regarding their new attitude. Comments were heard such as: "New facilities have had a great impact internally and externally;" and "A new building has brought professionalism." The leadership completely embraced a continuous improvement plan from over the last five years and has led the agency faculty and staff along this journey creating the positive environment that now exists within the institution.

In summary, the agency experienced an AdvancED review in 2014 that had numerous areas for improvement. The leadership embraced the report and has firmly placed the institution on a continuous improvement journey. Since the last review, there have been several changes at the institution as a result of the efforts of the leadership. Part of the changes that have occurred at the institution include an intensive approach to communication with stakeholders using social media and the development of a service framework based on the Danielson Model. These efforts also coincide with several other data collected by the institution, but these efforts are only in their infancy. These efforts have the potential to improve effectiveness of the institution to the districts served, but they are not formalized in policy or practice. Formalization of these efforts may enhance the probability they will become a part of the institution and ultimately embedded as a part of the culture.

Formalization of activities should not be limited to the new initiatives recently enacted but can also extend to other efforts that have become part of the institution. The emphasis on a social media outreach is only one aspect

of communication. Institutional leaders have many other avenues of communication that have been implemented including needs assessments and surveys after each professional development activity. Internal communication is limited according to interviews conducted. This is especially pertinent to contract employees who work in the districts served, but who have very limited contact with the agency. Through enhancement of the communication process, especially internal communications, institution leaders can work to become pro-active in their approach to activities offered to districts served rather than their current reactionary approach.

As stated, the institution personnel collect numerous types of data. By including communication data in this process and analyzing these data for trends over time, may enhance the ability of the agency to serve the districts. Utilizing SIMPL will allow for better opportunities to gather data and analyze those data on different levels. Formalizing these processes by requiring annual reports to the board by department, and programs within each department, may allow for leaders to better prioritize agency efforts.

Finally, the leadership has embraced the continuous improvement journey process. It was evident throughout the review that strong leadership has embedded the continuous improvement mindset into the agency. This mindset has created a positive culture within the agency that was very evident to all team members.

Next Steps

Upon receiving the Accreditation Engagement Review Report the institution is encouraged to implement the following steps:

- Review and share the findings with stakeholders.
- Develop plans to address the Priorities for Improvement identified by the Engagement Review Team.
- Use the findings and data from the report to guide and strengthen the institution's continuous improvement efforts.
- Celebrate the successes noted in the report
- Continue the improvement journey

Team Roster

The Engagement Review Teams are comprised of professionals with varied backgrounds and professional experiences. All Lead Evaluators and Engagement Review Team members complete AdvancED training and eleot certification to provide knowledge and understanding of the AdvancED tools and processes. The following professionals served on the Engagement Review Team:

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
Dr. Jim Ferrell, Lead Evaluator	Jim Ferrell currently serves as department chair for the Educational Leadership Department at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, where he is an associate professor. He also serves as program chair for the school administration program within the Educational Leadership Department. He worked as a classroom teacher for 12.5 years teaching social studies and Spanish in grades 6-12. After leaving the classroom, he worked as a middle school principal for six years. Dr. Ferrell earned a Bachelor of Arts in history from Oklahoma City University, a Master of Art in history from the University of Central Oklahoma, and an Education Doctorate in school administration from Oklahoma State University. He has served on the Oklahoma Council for AdvancED and has participated on or led AdvancED teams in Alabama, Kentucky, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and South Dakota.
Ms. Jadie Beam	Jadie Beam is currently director of professional learning at Educational Service Unit #13 (ESU #13) in Scottsbluff, Nebraska. She has worked at ESU #13 for 6 years. Jadie taught at Gering Public School for 18 years, as a special education teacher, before serving for many years as a reading program coordinator and reading coach. Jadie works with school districts in the area of Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and moving districts forward at a system level. Jadie is a direct instruction trainer for the reading mastery program and has shared those skills in schools across the state and around the country. Among other topics, she also offers to districts support in reading, instructional coaching, special education, assessment, leadership and the school improvement process. Beam has a Master of Art in education in curriculum and instruction and in educational administration from Chadron State College and a Bachelor of Science in special education K-12 from University of Nebraska at Kearney.
Mr. Robert Jensen	Robbie Jensen has worked in public education in a variety of roles. He started as a para-professional and then became an elementary classroom teacher, technology teacher, staff developer and technology coach. He currently works at Educational Service Unit #3 as the digital learning coordinator, in the professional learning department. He has a Bachelor and Master degree in elementary education and an endorsement in instructional technology from the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
Ms. Freida Lange	Freida Lange recently retired from her role as senior administrator of accreditation and school improvement for the Nebraska State Department of Education (NDE). She is currently a consultant for AdvancED in the area of continuous school improvement. Her Bachelor of Art. and Master of Science. degrees include elementary education, special education, and gifted education, with an Educational Specialist degree in education leadership with endorsements for K-12 principal and superintendent. She has also served as adjunct faculty for the University of Nebraska, Chadron State College, and Doane University with an emphasis on assessment literacy. During her 48-year tenure in the field of education, she served as an elementary and middle school classroom teacher, coordinator for K-12 gifted programs, building administrator, Educational Service Unit (ESU) director of professional development, and the last 14 years at the NDE she also served as the state director for AdvancED.
Dr. JoAnn Stevens	JoAnn Stevens is a retired school administrator, presently living in Peoria, Arizona. She has teaching and administrative experience in Nebraska and Kansas, having been a high school principal and assistant principal, middle school principal and assistant principal, and a teacher. She has a Bachelor of Art, Master of Art., Educational Specialist, and Education Doctorate. from the University of Nebraska. Dr. Stevens has been involved in the AdvancED process as a school and system team member and Lead Evaluator.
Dr. Caryn Ziettlow	Caryn Ziettlow is the lead professional developer and agency improvement chair for Educational Service Unit #2 (ESU #2) in Fremont, Nebraska. Her focus areas are English language art instruction with an emphasis on writing instruction, co-teaching, agency improvement and leadership. She has been at the ESU #2 for 4 years. Previous to ESU #2, Caryn was an elementary principal with 14 years of leadership and implementation experience in Nebraska assessments and standards accountability, Positive Behavior Supports (PBIS), Response to Intervention (RTI) reading program, a K-6 balanced literacy program, and coordination of special education programs at North Bend Central and Hemingford public schools. Additionally, she led school improvement programs and served as an external team member. Dr. Ziettlow has an earned Doctorate in Education (Ed.D.) in curriculum and instruction from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln; a Master of Art in elementary administration and a Bachelor of Science in elementary education from Chadron State College.

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About AdvancED

AdvancED is a non-profit, non-partisan organization serving the largest community of education

professionals in the world. Founded on more than 100 years of work in continuous improvement,

AdvancED combines the knowledge and expertise of a research institute, the skills of a management

consulting firm and the passion of a grassroots movement for educational change to empower

Pre-K-12 schools and school systems to ensure that all learners realize their full potential.