

# Report of the External Review for Soldotna High School

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US

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## Introduction to the External Review

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 student performance 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 includes Powerful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement identified by the External Review Team, as well as evaluations of Student Performance, the Learning Environment, Stakeholder Feedback and Assurances.

### 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. Before implementation, the standards were reviewed by internationally recognized experts in testing and measurement, teacher quality, and education research.

This section contains a detailed evaluation of each of AdvancED's Accreditation Standards and Indicators, identification of Powerful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement related to each of the standards (if appropriate), and a description of the evidence examined by the External Review team.

The AdvancED Standards and Indicators are the first of three primary areas of evaluation for AdvancED's Performance Accreditation model. Using indicator-specific performance levels, the External Review Team evaluates the degree to which the institution meets each indicator on a scale of 1 to 4. The scores assigned to the indicators are averaged to arrive at a single score. This score, along with scores from evaluations of student performance and stakeholder feedback, will be used to determine the accreditation status of the institution.

Average Indicator Score for this Institution	3.09
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**Standard 1: 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.**

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

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

Standard 1			
The school maintains and communicates a purpose and direction that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
1.1	The school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Documentation or description of the process for creating the school's purpose including the role of stakeholders</li> <li>• Purpose statements - past and present</li> <li>• Presentation</li> </ul>	3.0
1.2	The school's leadership and staff commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning and supports challenging, equitable educational programs and learning experiences for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agendas and/or minutes that reference a commitment to the components of the school's statement of purpose</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Survey results</li> <li>• The school's statement of purpose</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Presentation</li> <li>• Teacher Enrichment Pathway for Evaluation</li> </ul>	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
1.3	The school's leadership implements a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Survey results</li> <li>• Agenda, minutes from continuous improvement planning meetings</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• The school continuous improvement plan</li> </ul>	3.0

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

### ***Indicator***

1. Review and revise the school's mission statement with a focus on clearly articulating the essence of purpose for student success.

1.1

The school's purpose and mission were found in the resources and accreditation report. There is a sense that the community at large is working together to create and to maintain an environment that ensures the opportunity for each member of the school community to reach a high level of individual, academic and vocational achievement. However, there is little evidence of a formalized process of review, revision and communication of the school's purpose. A formal process to review and provide input on the school's purpose and mission will promote collective and meaningful stakeholder involvement.

**Standard 2: The school operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and school effectiveness.**

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

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

Standard 2			
The school operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and school effectiveness.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student handbooks</li> <li>• Governing body policies, procedures, and practices</li> <li>• Staff handbooks</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• School handbooks</li> </ul>	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Governing body minutes relating to training</li> <li>• Assurances, certifications</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Governing body training plan</li> <li>• Governing body policies on roles and responsibilities, conflict of interest</li> <li>• Governing code of ethics</li> </ul>	4.0
2.3	The governing body ensures that the school leadership has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School improvement plan developed by the school</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Stakeholder input and feedback</li> <li>• Survey results regarding functions of the governing body</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	3.0
2.4	Leadership and staff foster a culture consistent with the school's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of collaboration and shared leadership</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Examples of decisions in support of the school's continuous improvement plan</li> <li>• Early Release Agendas</li> </ul>	3.0
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the school's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copies of surveys or screen shots from online surveys</li> <li>• Survey responses</li> <li>• Involvement of stakeholders in a school improvement plan</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Site Based Council Minutes</li> </ul>	3.0
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice and student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Governing body policy on supervision and evaluation</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	3.0

**Powerful Practices****Indicator**

1. The Kenai Peninsula Borough School Board provides strong, effective leadership for this geographically large and diverse district.

2.2

School leadership and staff in the district communicate respect for both the superintendent and the board, and recognize them as strong advocates for students, and also grant considerable autonomy to individual schools to pursue their own school improvement efforts. The board has a demonstrated pattern of functioning effectively, and is commended for having received a number of awards, particularly for their budgeting process and financial reporting. This commitment to effective oversight is one key to the documented improvements in student performance at Soldotna High School and throughout the district.

**Standard 3: The school's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning.**

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

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

Standard 3			
The school's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.1	The school's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at the next level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey results</li> <li>• Lesson plans</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Posted learning objectives</li> <li>• Course schedules</li> <li>• Course descriptions</li> <li>• Observations</li> </ul>	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.2	Curriculum, instruction, and assessment are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum guides</li> <li>• A description of the systematic review process for curriculum, instruction, and assessment</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Common assessments</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> </ul>	3.0
3.3	Teachers engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agenda items addressing these strategies</li> <li>• Examples of teacher use of technology as an instructional resource</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Examples of student use of technology as a learning tool</li> <li>• Student work demonstrating the application of knowledge</li> <li>• Surveys results</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Interdisciplinary projects</li> <li>• Presentations</li> </ul>	3.0
3.4	School leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum maps</li> <li>• Supervision and evaluation procedures</li> <li>• Peer or mentoring opportunities and interactions</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Presentation</li> </ul>	4.0
3.5	Teachers participate in collaborative learning communities to improve instruction and student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Examples of improvements to content and instructional practice resulting from collaboration</li> <li>• Presentation</li> </ul>	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.6	Teachers implement the school's instructional process in support of student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Examples of assessments that prompted modification in instruction</li> <li>• Presentations</li> </ul>	3.0
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the school's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Survey results</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Presentation</li> </ul>	3.0
3.8	The school engages families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keeps them informed of their children's learning progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey results</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Presentations</li> </ul>	3.0
3.9	The school has a formal structure whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the school who supports that student's educational experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of students matched to adult advocate</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Curriculum and activities of formal adult advocate structure</li> <li>• Master schedule with time for formal adult advocate structure</li> <li>• Description of formal adult advocate structures</li> <li>• Presentations</li> </ul>	4.0
3.10	Grading and reporting are based on clearly defined criteria that represent the attainment of content knowledge and skills and are consistent across grade levels and courses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Survey results</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Presentations</li> </ul>	3.0
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation tools for professional learning</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Presentations</li> </ul>	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.12	The school provides and coordinates learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• List of learning support services and student population served by such services</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Training and professional learning related to research on unique characteristics of learning</li> <li>• Data used to identify unique learning needs of students</li> <li>• Presentations</li> </ul>	3.0

**Powerful Practices****Indicator**

1. The administration and certified staff are fully committed to the improvement of instructional strategies through the consistent use of evaluation practices.

3.4

Danielson's Framework for Teaching and the use of the Teacher Enrichment Pathway are reviewed and monitored by teachers and administrators. Self-reflections, pre-conferences, informal observations, formal observations, post conferences, and summary conferences all take place using the protocol that was provided by the administration. By reviewing the data that has been collected, teachers are able to adjust their practices to improve instructional strategies.

2. The staff and students of the school are highly focused on engaging parents and the community in ways that enhance school experiences for students.

3.8

Their communication with parents and the community is first-rate and demonstrably effective, and they pride themselves in the ways in which they've been able to get parents to school and working for all students. The school has a number of ways to get parents involved, and even though all of these practices are very effective, the school is constantly striving to improve in this area. All students are likely to benefit from a high level of parent involvement as this is highly correlated with student success.

3. Soldotna High School (SoHi) staff participate in a formalized structure to ensure that individual students are provided long-term interaction with an adult advocate. Students are assigned to Advisory groups as freshmen and meet daily through graduation which allows them to build strong relationships over time. Students provided positive feedback for the many kinds of supports provided by adults at SoHi. Advisory functions in a number of ways, including monitoring of academic progress, the development of long-term and short-term goals, and focuses on academic, life, and citizenship skills. Observations, interviews, artifact, and policy perusals, as well as student and staff comments, provided complimentary evidence for having quality one-on-one attention from staff for students. Research supports this practice as promoting success in school.

3.9

Students are assigned to Advisory groups as freshmen and meet daily through graduation allowing them to build strong relationships over time. Students provided positive feedback for the many kinds of supports provided by adults at SoHi. Advisory functions in a number of ways, including monitoring of academic progress, the development of long-term and short-term goals, and focuses on academic, life, and citizenship skills. Observations, interviews, artifact and policy perusals, as well as student and staff comments, provided strong evidence for having quality one-on-one attention from staff for students. Research supports this practice as promoting success in school.

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

1. Employ a systematic process to ensure that student data is used in all classes and across the curriculum to drive instruction.

3.2

Based on interviews, observations and the presentation by the school administration, it was apparent the school is in the process of creating Professional Learning Communities(PLC's). The PLC's should be focused and monitored to ensure that formative and summative student assessment data is examined and is used to align curriculum and drive instruction in all classes.

**Standard 4: The school has resources and provides services that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.**

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

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

Standard 4			
The school has resources and provides services that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.1	Qualified professional and support staff are sufficient in number to fulfill their roles and responsibilities necessary to support the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Documentation of highly qualified staff</li> <li>• Presentations</li> </ul>	3.0
4.2	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• School schedule</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	3.0
4.3	The school maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Maintenance schedules</li> </ul>	3.0
4.4	Students and school personnel use a range of media and information resources to support the school's educational programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Budget related to media and information resource acquisition</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Data on media and information resources available to students and staff</li> </ul>	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.5	The technology infrastructure supports the school's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology plan and budget to improve technology services and infrastructure</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Survey results</li> <li>• Policies relative to technology use</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Presentations</li> </ul>	3.0
4.6	The school provides support services to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey results</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• List of support services available to students</li> <li>• Observations</li> </ul>	3.0
4.7	The school provides services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Description of referral process</li> <li>• Presentations</li> </ul>	3.0

**Standard 5: 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.**

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

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

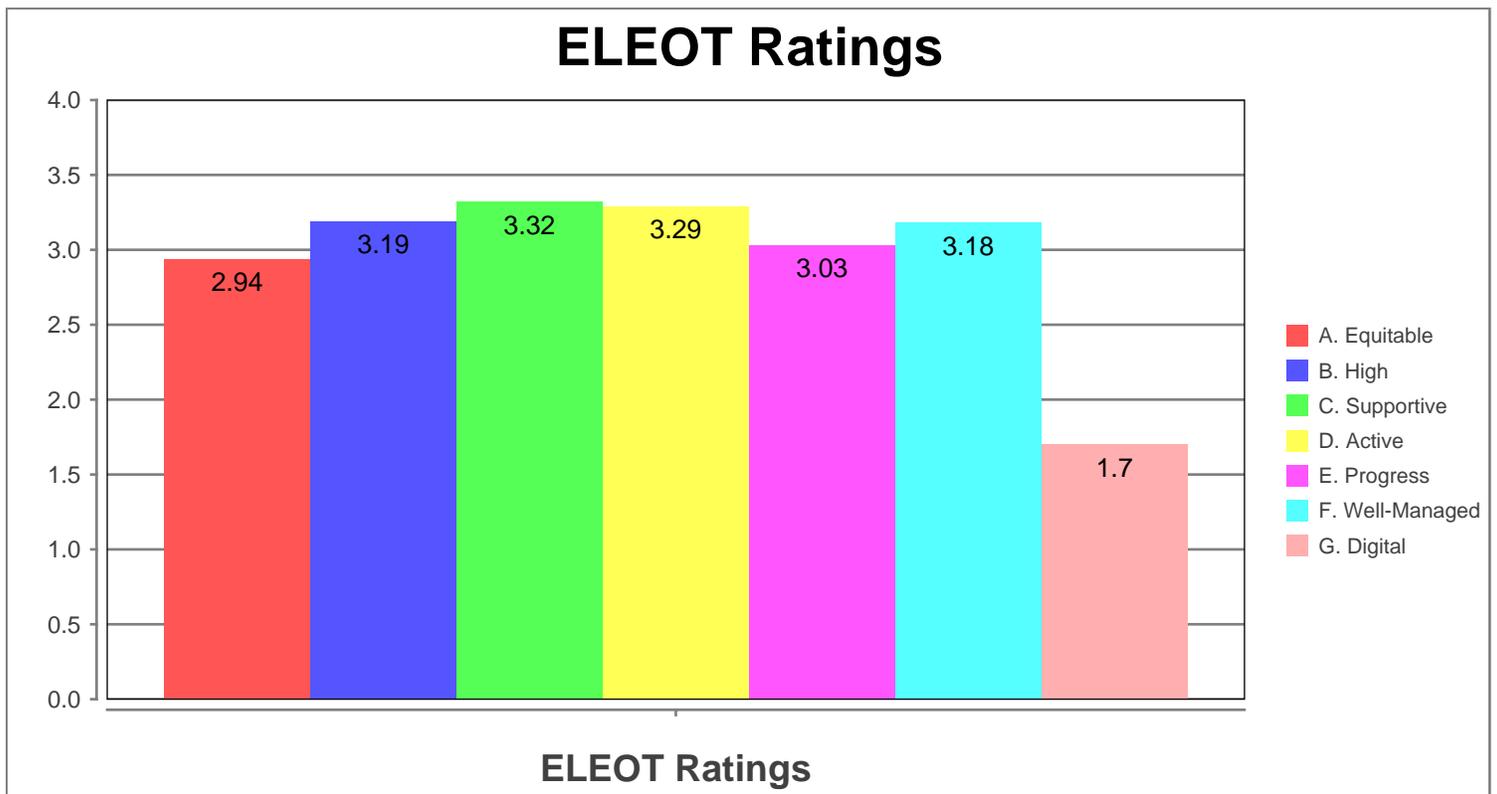
Standard 5			
The school implements a comprehensive assessment system that generates a range of data about student learning and school effectiveness and uses the results to guide continuous improvement.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.1	The school establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Documentation or description of evaluation tools/protocols</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Brief description of student assessment system including range of data produced from standardized and local assessments on student learning and school performance</li> </ul>	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.2	Professional and support staff continuously collect, analyze, and apply learning from a range of data sources, including comparison and trend data about student learning, instruction, program evaluation, and organizational conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Examples of use of data to design, implement, and evaluate continuous improvement plans and apply learning</li> <li>• List of data sources related to student learning, instruction, program effectiveness, and conditions that support learning</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> </ul>	3.0
5.3	Professional and support staff are trained in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Professional learning schedule specific to the use of data</li> <li>• Survey results</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Training materials specific to the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data</li> <li>• Presentations</li> </ul>	3.0
5.4	The school engages in a continuous process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning, including readiness for and success at the next level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agendas, minutes of meetings related to analysis of data</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Examples of use of results to evaluate continuous improvement action plans</li> <li>• Evidence of student growth</li> <li>• Evidence of student success at the next level</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Presentations</li> </ul>	3.0
5.5	Leadership monitors and communicates comprehensive information about student learning, conditions that support student learning, and the achievement of school improvement goals to stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Survey results</li> <li>• Accreditation Report</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Presentations</li> </ul>	3.0

## 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 four-point scale. The following provides the aggregate average score across multiple observations for each of the seven learning environments included in ELEOT.



## Student Performance

Student Performance on assessments is the second of three primary areas of evaluation for AdvancED's Performance Accreditation model. Institutions are asked to collect and analyze student performance data, then submit the data and the analyses to the External Review Team for review. The External Review Team evaluates the quality of the assessments used by the institution, the degree to which the institution properly administered the assessments, analyzed and acted on the results, and the overall performance of students using a set of rubrics. The scale is from 1 (low performing) to 4 (high performing). Results of that evaluation are reported below.

Student Performance Evaluation	
Evaluative Criteria	Performance Level
Assessment Quality	4.0
Test Administration	4.0
Quality of Learning	4.0
Equity of Learning	2.0

## Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholder Feedback is the third of three primary areas of evaluation in AdvancED's Performance Accreditation model. The AdvancED surveys are directly correlated to the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators; they provide not only direct information about stakeholder satisfaction but also become a source of data for triangulation by the External Review Team as it evaluates indicators.

Institutions are asked to collect and analyze stakeholder feedback data, then submit the data and the analyses to the External Review Team for review. The External Review Team evaluates the quality of the administration of the surveys by institution and the degree to which the institution analyzed and acted on the results. The scale is from 1 (low performing) to 4 (high performing). Results of that evaluation are reported below.

Stakeholder Feedback Evaluation	
Evaluative Criteria	Performance Level
Questionnaire Administration	4.0
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	3.0

## Part II: Conclusion

### ***Summary of the External Review***

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

The External Review for Soldotna High School was conducted over a two-day period, and the school was well-prepared for the team's visit. Staff, students and parents were open and honest in their self-appraisal, as well as forthcoming in the sharing of information. A total of 41 stakeholder participated in the face-to-face interviews (27 students, 3 parents, 3 support staff, 6 teachers and 2 administrators), and the team conducted 21 Effective Learning Environment Observation Tool™ (ELEOT™) observations.

***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.***

Evidence supported the school's report that the community at large is working together, and that there is a strong commitment to pursuing the school's goals. One of the team's recommendations, however, was that the school would benefit from a more formalized process of review, revision and communication of the school's purpose. The school and district maintain good communication with stakeholders, and are committed to adult-student relationships as a support to student success. The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District is commended for its commitment to a systemic process for the improvement of teaching and learning, and for its focus on serving the many diverse communities of the Kenai Peninsula with education that matches the clientele.

Soldotna High School, like other schools in the Kenai District, is strongly committed to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and Learning that drives their teacher evaluation system. They believe that it is helping teachers improve their practices and helps the staff work together with common language and goals.

The school has also been working on the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLC's). The team recommended that the school take steps to see that all staff are trained in this model, and that action steps and timelines be developed to maximize the potential for this collaborative process. Participation in PLCs will empower teachers to look more carefully at standards, common assessments, and data, with the ultimate goal of improving instructional practices, as well as differentiating instruction. Students are generally well-known in the school, partly as a result of the Advisory program where students are placed with an advisor as a freshman and stay with that group until they graduate. While Advisory looked different from class to class, it was strongly supported by students, who felt they benefited from the practice.

***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.***

The team conducted 21 classroom observations throughout the school. During these observations, the team observed high levels of student engagement, as well as positive attitudes about the classroom and learning. Lessons were challenging but attainable, and student-teacher and student-student relationships were positive. Less apparent was a wide variety of instructional strategies, and deliberate differentiation to meet individual student needs.

The Soldotna High School External Review Team extends its appreciation for the exceptional hospitality of all members of the school staff, as well as the warm welcome of students and community members. The team extends encouragement and support to the district's continuing school improvement process and recognizes the dedication and hard work of teachers and staff.

In the past, accreditation reviews resulted in an accreditation recommendation on status. Labels such as advised, warned, probation, or all clear were used to describe the status of a school relative to the criteria. Beginning with school year, 2013-14, AdvancED is introducing a new framework to describe the result of an accreditation review. Consistent with the modern focus of accreditation on continuous improvement with an emphasis on student success, AdvancED introduces an innovative and state-of-the-art framework for diagnosing and revealing institutional performance called the Index of Education Quality (IEQ). The IEQ is comprised of three domains of performance: 1) the impact of teaching and learning on student performance; 2) the leadership capacity to govern; and 3) use of resources to support and optimize learning. Therefore, your institution will no longer receive an accreditation status. Instead, your institution will be accredited with an IEQ score. In the case where an institution is failing to meet established criteria, the accreditation will be under review thereby requiring frequent monitoring.

The three domains of performance are derived from the AdvancED Standards and Indicators, the Analysis of Student Performance, and the Engagement and Involvement of Stakeholders. Within each domain institutions will be able to connect to the individual performance levels that are applied in support of the AdvancED Standards and evaluative criteria. Within the performance levels are detailed descriptors that can be a valuable source of guidance for continuous improvement. Upon review of the findings in this report, institutional leaders should work with their staff to review and understand the evidence and rationale for each Required Action as well as the corresponding pathway to improvement described in the performance levels of the selected Indicator.

The IEQ provides a new framework that recognizes and supports the journey of continuous improvement. Your institution's IEQ is the starting point for continuous improvement. Your actions for improvement that have a positive impact will be reflected in your IEQ score.

IEQ Institutional Score: 315

Teaching and Learning Impact: 319  
(Standards 3 and 5; Student Performance Criteria)

Leadership Capacity: 318  
(Standards 1 and 2; Stakeholder Engagement Criteria)

Resource Utilization: 300

(Standard 4)

The External Review Team would like to thank Soldotna High School staff and students for the warm welcome. We would particularly like to thank the accreditation leadership team for providing a work location, access to interview participants, request for additional evidence and artifacts, and basic needs of food and drink.

Based on our findings from the review of evidence, the External Review Team recommends that Soldotna High School be accredited for a five-year term, pending further review and final action by the AdvancEd Accreditation Commission.

## Required Action

1. Evaluate the progress that has been made in working toward Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to date, and identify the tasks to be accomplished over the next two years to ensure that efforts result in changed instructional practices and improved student achievement.

Related Indicator or Assurance: 3.5

### Description:

This year the staff of Soldotna High School has made some progress in planning the implementation of Professional Learning Communities, but there is a lot of work yet to be done. Although they have been participating in Soldotna Learning Teams (SLT's), these teams appear to be administration directed, while the envisioned PLC's will be driven by instructional staff and the learning needs of students. Additionally, all staff will need to be trained in the PLC model, and specific strategies and action steps, with timelines, will need to be identified. Participation in PLCs will empower teachers to look more carefully at standards, common assessments, and data, with the ultimate goal of improving instructional practices throughout the school, as well as differentiating instruction to reduce the subpopulation achievement gaps. A two- to three-year concerted effort should bring about even more positive results in student learning.

## Part III: Addenda

### *The External Review Team*

**Lead Evaluator:**

Mr. richard e carlson

**Associate Lead Evaluator:**

Mrs. Mary Johnstone

**Reviewer:**

Ms. Norene Rice

**Team Member:**

Mr. Jeff Ambrosier

Dr. Ginger Blackmon

Mrs. Sharon Lee Story

## **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 addressing 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 appropriate state, national, and/or international levels 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 that confers accreditation 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, and the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) came together to form AdvancED: one strong, unified organization dedicated to education quality. In 2011, the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC) that was founded in 1917 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.

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

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