Report of the
External Review Team
for
Resolution Ranch

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Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Use of Diagnostic Tools

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

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

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

Index of Education Quality

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

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

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

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

Benchmark Data

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

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

Powerful Practices

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

Opportunities for Improvement

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

Improvement Priorities

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

The Review

Resolution Ranch, a therapeutic boarding school in Cameron, Texas, hosted a team to conduct a School Accreditation External Review on February 25-26, 2015. A four-member AdvancED External Review Team, composed of a lead evaluator and three additional experienced persons, devoted two days to offer their knowledge and expertise to support the participation of the school in the External Review process. Prior to the visit, the Lead Evaluator communicated over the course of several months with the school's chief executive officer, the school administrator, and the school's education director to develop a plan for the visit that included program observations, a review of artifacts, and interviews with stakeholder groups.

Prior to the site visit, the Lead Evaluator called and emailed team members so that they could review documents that the school's education director had uploaded to the workspace. The system for inputting individual ratings for the standard/rating was also reviewed. Team members were directed to read and become familiar with all of the standards and indicators prior to reading the Accreditation Report. They were also assigned to specific standards and held responsible for a more in depth understanding of the school's self-assessment of the standards and the evidence provided to support their ratings.

During the site visit, the team considered information provided school in the school's report, evidence

presented in artifacts, classroom and program activities and observations, and interviews with stakeholders to support their findings about the school's improvement effort. A total of 16 stakeholders provided their perspectives on the Resolution Ranch program during the External Review interview sessions. Throughout the External Review, school leaders, faculty, staff, and students provided candid responses to interview questions and reflections about their continuous improvement efforts.

The External Review Team expresses its appreciation to the staff and stakeholders of Resolution Ranch for the warm welcome, gracious hospitality (that included securing accommodations for one more night when we were snowed in), and the hot coffee, delicious snacks and nutritious meals provided throughout the visit. The school's leadership and staff are commended for adjusting their program and supervision schedules to make staff members available to assist the External Review Team during the review process. The staff of Resolution Ranch also is commended for their preparation of the Executive Summary, Self-Assessment, and supporting artifacts. The documents contained detailed and transparent information regarding the school's level of attainment for each indicator. The school was explicit in identifying accomplishments and areas for improvement and supporting their conclusions with authentic data that is unique to the school's special purpose as a therapeutic boarding school. Leadership began developing a comprehensive School Improvement Plan, and initiated, even before the visit, improvement actions based on findings of the Self-Assessment.

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

Stakeholder Interviewed	Number
Superintendents	1
Chief Executive Officer/President	1
Owner	1
Administrators	3
Instructional Staff	4
Support Staff	9
Students	3
Total	**22**

Results

Teaching and Learning Impact

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

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

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

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

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

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

Standard 3 - Teaching and Assessing for Learning

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
3.1	The curriculum provides equitable and challenging academic content and authentic learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking and life skills.	3.00	3.08
3.2	Curriculum, instruction and assessments are designed, monitored and revised systematically in response to data from multiple assessments and an examination of professional practices.	3.00	2.97
3.3	Teachers engage students in their learning by using various methods and instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	3.00	2.63
3.4	Leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	3.00	2.84
3.5	Professional and support personnel participate in collaborative learning communities to improve instruction and student learning.	4.00	2.42
3.6	Teachers implement the institution's instructional process in support of student learning.	3.00	2.58
3.7	Mentoring, coaching and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the institution's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	4.00	2.79

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
3.8	The institution engages parents or guardians in meaningful ways in their children's education and keeps them informed of their children's learning progress. In the case of adult students, the students are informed of their learning progress rather than the family.	4.00	2.63
3.9	The institution has a formal structure whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate who supports that student's educational experience.	4.00	2.84
3.10	Grading and reporting are based on clearly defined policies that represent the attainment of content knowledge and skills.	3.00	3.37
3.11	Professional and support personnel participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	3.00	2.71

Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
5.1	The institution establishes and maintains a clearly defined student assessment system.	3.00	2.84
5.2	Professional and support personnel continuously collect, analyze and apply learning using a range of data sources that include trend data about student learning, instruction and program evaluation for continuous improvement.	3.00	2.45
5.3	Professional and support personnel are trained in the evaluation, interpretation and use of relevant data.	2.00	2.00
5.4	The institution engages in a continuous improvement process to determine verifiable improvement in student learning.	3.00	2.45
5.5	Leadership monitors and communicates information about student learning, conditions that support student learning and the achievement of improvement goals to stakeholders.	3.00	2.76

Findings

Improvement Priority

Increase use of documentation of surveys, intake and exit data, PLATO assessment data, and other data points to establish trends that will highlight areas of success and areas of improvement for the school's program. This data could include graduation rates, college entrance, rates, college completion rates, and other measures as deemed appropriate by the school's leadership. Because of the nature of Resolution Ranch, this data will often be qualitative and narrative in nature. It can be used to help market the program to young men

that the school leadership believes it can best serve. Data gathered from such action research could not only inform continuous improvement but could contribute significantly to the body of research that informs practices for therapeutic boarding schools.

(Indicators 5.4)

Evidence and Rationale

Resolution Ranch uses a number of sources to monitor the progress of students in the program and has recently purchased a student tracking system to assist in documentation and record keeping. While the school carefully collects and documents data while students are in residence, the school's accreditation report and interviews reveal that little data exist that reflects the success of students after they leave the program. During interviews, administrators and therapists agreed that additional data on long term success rates could be helpful in informing the continuous improvement process, especially since transitioning back into a more traditional environment is part of the school's purpose. School personnel also agreed that such data is complex to gather and analyze because of the difficulty of maintaining contact with students after they leave the program and the existence of confounding variables such as mental health issues or toxic home or school environments which the students may re-enter. Still, such data could inform further program development to address such life circumstances that students may experience.

Opportunity for Improvement

Compile a series of curriculum materials, resources and strategies to employ when the computerized instructional program is unable to be utilized or is inadequate for a student's needs, so that student progress on educational goals and objectives can continue as is appropriate.

(Indicators 3.3, 4.5)

Evidence and Rationale

Based on interviews and the accreditation report, the External Review team notes that the school's academic instructional program would benefit from increasing available resources to supplement the online curriculum. Teachers in the program already have begun building a library of additional textbooks and online resources. Additional manipulative materials would be beneficial for helping students with concept attainment.

The school has recently contracted with a technology company to improve its network infrastructure so that the facility bandwidth is sufficient to meet the demands of all students participating at once in an online instructional program.

Opportunity for Improvement

Provide additional training to staff on the design, use, and interpretation of data that would assist them in assessing the effectiveness of the school's academic and therapeutic programs. All personnel participate in a continuous program of professional learning that is aligned with the institution's purpose and direction. Professional development is based on the needs of the institution and builds capacity among personnel who participate. The program is informally evaluated for effectiveness. Resolution Ranch personnel meet weekly for staff development in session that include training, information updates, discussions of challenges and successes, and coordination of events and activities. During interviews, personnel reported that these

meetings are helpful. They also reported their desire to have more training on effective mentoring of new staff.

(Indicators 3.11)

Evidence and Rationale

Resolution Ranch has committed resources and training to increase its number of educators and therapists on staff. A review of artifacts, the accreditation report, and interviews with the education staff reveal that a need and a desire exist to provide additional training opportunities related directly to the instructional process. The school's special purpose requires a unique set of data to measure student progress and to measure success after leaving the program. While many mitigating factors may affect students' long-term outcome, the school has an opportunity to gather data to help staff understand which aspects of the program may be most effective. To that end, the school has developed surveys to use for following the progress of graduates. Training to develop survey instruments that are valid and reliable would be of great benefit to the school's continuous improvement process.

Powerful Practice

All professional and support personnel participate in collaborative communities that meet both informally and formally throughout the day, weekly, and on a regularly scheduled basis. Frequent collaboration occurs across program departments and from leadership through all organizational levels. Learning from, using, and discussing the results of inquiry practices such as action research, the examination of student work, evaluation of students' progress through their programs, reflection, and peer coaching are a part of the daily routine of all personnel. Personnel can clearly link collaboration to improvement results in student growth and professional practice.

Programs that engage parents or guardians in meaningful ways in their children's education are designed, implemented, and evaluated. Parents or guardians have multiple ways of staying informed on their student's progress and academic growth and achievement.
(Indicators 3.5, 3.8)

Evidence and Rationale

Observations, artifacts, and interviews with stakeholders clearly demonstrated an embedded learning community that is an essential component of the school's culture and program structure. Leadership, staff and residents are versed in common vocabulary such as "self-progressive," "didactive behavioral therapy (DBT)," and "rational detachment." Strategies and practices for intervention are known and practiced by all departments. For example, the school's PLATO educational platform is self-progressive, requiring students to master objectives and work at a pace that is challenging but equitable, and the school's RANCH level attainment program also is self-progressive, meaning that the residents advance through levels when they make rational choices that result in their progress. Supports are available from staff and peers. As one student we interviewed stated, "We (students) are all dependent upon one another in some way." For the residents of this program, learning to rely on and value the interdependence of a learning community is an essential life skill and aide in their recovery.

Engaging parents in therapy and informing them of their student's progress is an essential element of the school's program. Communication home is scheduled on a calendar as well as provided ad hoc. Teachers regularly communicate with parents regarding their child's progress, and a parent portal is available for families. Staff maintain a communication log as one form of documentation. The school also utilizes social media, its website, and emails. A student-created newsletter, in which students explore the issues they are grappling with, also goes home to families.

Powerful Practice

Meaningful engagement of parents is an essential component of the Resolution Ranch program. Parents or guardians have multiple ways of staying informed of their children's progress. Since students in the programs are separated from their homes as part of their therapy, staff have an elevated responsibility to maintain communication with home. Counseling parents to help families change and improve their communication styles and dynamics are part of the communication from school to home.

All personnel participate in a structure that gives them constant interaction with individual students and with other adults with whom the students interact. All students participate in the structure. The structure allows personnel to gain significant insight and serve as accountability partner and advocate for the student's needs regarding life skills, thinking skills, academic learning, safety, rational decision-making, and self-regulation.

The school has a clearly defined induction program that is personalized for each student. Information from the induction program is used to develop personalized support systems and academic plans to meet the needs of all students. Improvement plans related to the induction program and support systems are designed and implemented to more effectively meet the needs of all students.

(Indicators 3.8, 3.9, 4.6)

Evidence and Rationale

Beginning with the initial contact a family makes with the school to the completion of the program, the school conducts a systematic process of parent communication and counseling. A review of artifacts including samples of communications home, newsletters, and calendars, along with evidence from interviews, demonstrates a consistent and strategic process of communication from school to home. Therapists, teachers, and leadership work collaboratively to provide support and counsel to each student and his family.

Students at Resolution Ranch have round-the-clock supervision by Direct Care staff in a ratio that is typically six-to-one. Direct Care staff are closely involved with the residents and aware of their struggles and progress, as well as their whereabouts and activities at all times. Students also have access to therapists, counselors, and during the academic day, teachers. All staff members communicate regarding students on a "need to know" basis. Respectful communication regarding students is a priority among all staff and is required of residents. A unique feature of the school's program is the EAGALA equine therapy, in which each student also gets to know and is known by the school's therapy horses.

The school's case manager and program director work closely with each student and his family to design a

program that meets the student's particular needs for therapy. All students work through the school's 5 level program, but the activities in the levels may differ based on the student's background and challenges. Students also are assessed for academic placement and their curriculum is supplemented as needed. A schedule of family services including parenting classes is provided, as are social classes such as anti-bullying and character education classes. The school coordinates with social agencies such as Narcotics Anonymous (NA) for students who need support beyond that which the school provides individually and in groups.

Leadership Capacity

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

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

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

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

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

Standard 1 - Purpose and Direction

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
1.1	The institution engages in a systematic, inclusive and comprehensive process to review, revise and communicate an educational purpose for student success.	3.00	2.66
1.2	Leadership and personnel commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning that supports challenging, equitable and adaptable specialized educational programs and learning experiences for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking and life skills.	4.00	2.92
1.3	Leadership and personnel implement a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	3.00	2.45

Standard 2 - Governance and Leadership

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
2.1	The governing authority establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the institution.	3.00	2.97
2.2	The governing authority operates responsibly and functions effectively.	3.00	2.89
2.3	The governing authority ensures that the leadership has the autonomy to meet goals for achievement and instruction and to manage the operations effectively.	3.00	3.29
2.4	Leadership and personnel foster a culture consistent with the institution's purpose and direction.	4.00	3.13
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the institution's purpose and direction.	3.00	2.84
2.6	Leadership and personnel supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice and student success.	4.00	2.55
2.7	The institution promotes, markets and operates with truthful and ethical practices in fulfillment of its purpose.	4.00	3.08

Findings

Improvement Priority

Develop, implement, and maintain a comprehensive continuous school improvement plan, including goals, objectives, time lines, and a working budget developed for the uniqueness of the school's mission. (Indicators 1.3)

Evidence and Rationale

The school's process for collecting and analyzing data is organic and dependent upon the judgment of the qualified school staff. Personnel use results to design, implement and evaluate ideas to implement toward the goals of continuous improvement. Bringing all programs into a strategic planning process would structure and improve efficiency for documentation, analysis and communication regarding student progress. Since enrollment at the school fluctuates and needs vary according to the current population, leadership reported that finding a working budget has been challenging. The school reports that its financial statements are reviewed and approved by an outside auditor, and personnel stated in interviews that the budget is sufficient to meet the needs of their programs. The school leadership could consider the establishment of a nonprofit endowment to supplement program needs and serve as a potential source for scholarships for students.

Powerful Practice

Commitment to shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning is clearly evident in decision making and in communications among leadership and staff. All leaders, educators, and support staff collaborate to create and maintain challenging but equitable programs that promote academic and personal growth. Life skills are prioritized throughout the curriculum. Evidence from observations, interviews, and artifacts indicates a strong commitment to instructional practices that include active and diverse forms of student engagement, a focus on depth and breadth of understanding, and real-life application of knowledge and skills. All personnel hold themselves to high expectations for professional practice. Leaders and personnel deliberately and consistently align their decisions and actions toward continuous improvement to achieve the institution's special purpose. They encourage, support, and expect one another as well as students to hold themselves accountable. Leaders actively and consistently support and encourage innovation, collaboration, shared leadership and rigorous professional growth. The culture is strongly characterized by a sense of community and collaboration. Leadership and other personnel meet weekly to maintain their focus on supervision and evaluation goals and processes. The results of evaluation are used to monitor and adjust professional practices to ensure that students make progress in the program. Leadership and staff place a priority on truthful and ethical professional practices and are respectful of professional standards in therapy, counseling, academics, and state licensing.

(Indicators 1.2, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7)

Evidence and Rationale

Observations of interactions among stakeholders and interviews with stakeholders revealed a staff that is committed to the personal and academic growth of all residents in the program. Communication is ongoing and all staff are committed to ensuring that essential messages are delivered on a "need to know" basis for all residents. All staff and residents communicate openly and respectfully about their challenges and their

successes. In interviews, staff shared the leadership's willingness to listen to ideas and stated that many ideas originating with the staff had been implemented over the school's history. The school program emphasizes accountability for residents, and this same accountability is evident among staff members. Licensing requirements are treated with respect, and compliance is a priority for all leadership and staff. All stakeholders reported a sense of community and caring among the staff. Residents also reported that the relationships they develop with the teachers and Direct Care staff are essential to their growth, development, and recovery.

Resource Utilization

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

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

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

Standard 4 - Resources and Support Systems

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.1	Qualified professional and support personnel are sufficient in number to fulfill their roles and responsibilities necessary to support the institution's purpose and direction and student success.	3.00	2.97
4.2	Instructional time, material resources and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the institution.	3.00	2.92
4.3	The institution maintains learning environments, services and equipment that are safe, clean and healthy for all students and staff.	4.00	3.16
4.4	Students and institution personnel use a range of information and media resources to support the educational programs.	3.00	2.87
4.5	The technology infrastructure supports the institution's teaching, learning and operational needs.	2.00	2.58

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.6	The institution provides students with support systems to enable student success in the learning environment.	4.00	3.13

Findings

Opportunity for Improvement

Compile a series of curriculum materials, resources and strategies to employ when the computerized instructional program is unable to be utilized or is inadequate for a student's needs, so that student progress on educational goals and objectives can continue as is appropriate.
(Indicators 3.3, 4.5)

Evidence and Rationale

Based on interviews and the accreditation report, the External Review team notes that the school's academic instructional program would benefit from increasing available resources to supplement the online curriculum. Teachers in the program already have begun building a library of additional textbooks and online resources. Additional manipulative materials would be beneficial for helping students with concept attainment.

The school has recently contracted with a technology company to improve its network infrastructure so that the facility bandwidth is sufficient to meet the demands of all students participating at once in an online instructional program.

Powerful Practice

Institution leaders have adopted and collaboratively created clear definitions and expectations for maintaining safety, cleanliness and a healthy environment that comply with or exceed licensing standards. These expectations are known and shared by all stakeholders. All personnel and students are accountable for maintaining these expectations. Valid measures are in place that allow for continuous tracing of these conditions. Improvement plans are developed and implemented by appropriate personnel to continuously improve these conditions the results of improvement efforts are systematically evaluated.
(Indicators 4.3)

Evidence and Rationale

Interviews with stakeholders revealed careful attention to the safety of all residents and to compliance with all licensing requirements and expectations. All staff are expected to be in compliance with all requirements at all times. The External Review Team witnessed the student-led captain system, in which students work under the supervision of adult staff to assist one another with chores that keep the facility clean and orderly and help build ownership and accountability among the residents. All residents understand that they are to report any difficulties they have to the supervising adult. Students assist with maintenance duties while they learn life skills such as leadership, communication, patience, and coaching. Artifacts revealed detailed logs. Personnel files included all certifications and training logs.

The campus is secured by locked doors that are opened with electronic badges. The school manages to maintain a safe and secure environment within an atmosphere of discipline, order, and caring.

Powerful Practice

Meaningful engagement of parents is an essential component of the Resolution Ranch program. Parents or guardians have multiple ways of staying informed of their children's progress. Since students in the programs are separated from their homes as part of their therapy, staff have an elevated responsibility to maintain communication with home. Counseling parents to help families change and improve their communication styles and dynamics are part of the communication from school to home.

All personnel participate in a structure that gives them constant interaction with individual students and with other adults with whom the students interact. All students participate in the structure. The structure allows personnel to gain significant insight and serve as accountability partner and advocate for the student's needs regarding life skills, thinking skills, academic learning, safety, rational decision-making, and self-regulation.

The school has a clearly defined induction program that is personalized for each student. Information from the induction program is used to develop personalized support systems and academic plans to meet the needs of all students. Improvement plans related to the induction program and support systems are designed and implemented to more effectively meet the needs of all students.

(Indicators 3.8, 3.9, 4.6)

Evidence and Rationale

Beginning with the initial contact a family makes with the school to the completion of the program, the school conducts a systematic process of parent communication and counseling. A review of artifacts including samples of communications home, newsletters, and calendars, along with evidence from interviews, demonstrates a consistent and strategic process of communication from school to home. Therapists, teachers, and leadership work collaboratively to provide support and counsel to each student and his family.

Students at Resolution Ranch have round-the-clock supervision by Direct Care staff in a ratio that is typically six-to-one. Direct Care staff are closely involved with the residents and aware of their struggles and progress, as well as their whereabouts and activities at all times. Students also have access to therapists, counselors, and during the academic day, teachers. All staff members communicate regarding students on a "need to know" basis. Respectful communication regarding students is a priority among all staff and is required of residents. A unique feature of the school's program is the EAGALA equine therapy, in which each student also gets to know and is known by the school's therapy horses.

The school's case manager and program director work closely with each student and his family to design a program that meets the student's particular needs for therapy. All students work through the school's 5 level program, but the activities in the levels may differ based on the student's background and challenges. Students also are assessed for academic placement and their curriculum is supplemented as needed. A schedule of family services including parenting classes is provided, as are social classes such as anti-bullying and

character education classes. The school coordinates with social agencies such as Narcotics Anonymous (NA) for students who need support beyond that which the school provides individually and in groups.

Conclusion

Resolution Ranch is a therapeutic boarding school for troubled teenage boys ages 13-17. The school, which operates as an L.L.C., was founded by its Chief Executive Officer in 2004. The school's program is designed to address the need for behavior modification that results from discipline problems, lack of respect for authority or the law, poor academic achievement, family dysfunction, substance abuse or addiction, self-mutilation, violent tendencies, and depression. The institution's location provides a remote setting and utilizes peer groups to help the residents strengthen their commitment to recovery. Each student's program is tailored to his particular troubles and life circumstances. The school has developed a unique RANCH (Recovery and Academics through Nature, Counseling and Healing) experience that requires students to progress through five levels of behavior modification that emphasize accountability, introspection, and rational self-evaluation.

The Chief Executive Officer and President is generally on-site and closely interacts with the leadership team, which consists of the Administrator, the Academic Director, and the Program Director. The Program Director supervises the Direct Care Coordinator, Direct Care staff, and all therapeutic staff. The Academic Director supervises full and part-time faculty. The entire staff meets weekly for training and to discuss strategies and best practices regarding the residents. The CEO has an advisory board consisting of professionals from business, psychology, and law.

The program includes onsite therapists and counselors and a small (generally six-to-one) ratio of Direct Care staff for each resident. Residents generally stay at the school for several months, during which time the school engages both the residents and their families in extensive counseling. Many residents arrive with academic deficiencies, so the program utilizes individualized, online instruction with several teachers and Direct Care staff present at all times. A notable component of the RANCH experience is equine program, which utilizes the principles of EAGALA (Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association), an equine therapy that utilizes the emotional intelligence of horses to encourage honesty in the residents and the development of a series of horsemanship skills that build each resident's confidence.

Resolution Ranch uses the PLATO online curriculum as the foundation for instruction. PLATO is standards-based and includes formative, ongoing, and summative assessments that include several reading measures and which also indicate mastery of target knowledge and skills. Upon arrival, residents complete initial reading, language arts, and math assessments. Based on these assessments and the student's academic record, the student's academic plan is developed, approved by his parents, and then students are assigned coursework on PLATO. Students complete one accelerated course at a time while they are at Resolution Ranch to assist them in credit recovery and to build successful study habits and patterns. The residents have two blocks of technology-based instruction during the day. Other blocks of time are devoted to hands-on learning activities and development of life skills as well as to group and individual therapy times.Teachers provide additional instructional materials and strategies for skill development and for extending and enriching the instructional program. During classroom observations, the External Review Team saw a customized program designed to meet the needs of the students enrolled at the school. All residents were in the classroom building working on individualized, technology-based modules. Additional materials were available as needed. Three teachers were present with the group of approximately 35 students, as were several Direct Care providers. All staff

routinely interacted with students to ensure their engagement and understanding.

Residents participate in daily maintenance of the facility. A cook prepares wholesome, balanced meals from fresh ingredients. The facility is secured by automatically locking doors and a badge system, and is disciplined and orderly but not oppressive. The entire program is designed around mutual interdependence, respectful communication, and high standards of accountability and responsibility.

The school's leadership openly and transparently engages the challenges that are presented by the school's mission and purpose. To meet the therapeutic needs of the residents, the school's staff has been expanded to add additional therapists and counselors, and a case manager. The school operates year round, 24 hours a day, and is in a remote location, so finding and retaining qualified staff is always a challenge.

Many residents arrive at the school with academic deficiencies, so the leadership has increased the number of teaching staff and has redrawn the organizational chart to create an Academic Director. The school is adding an additional teacher with special education certification who will bring additional expertise to the development of each resident's academic plan.

The school's unique purpose and individually tailored academic program precludes traditional whole school academic assessments, so academic growth is measured individually. Still, the school recognizes the need to track its students' success after graduating from the program. Many mitigating factors may be found in the students' home and school environments, making it difficult to identify the variables that may enhance or hinder student success after leaving the program. Still, the leadership recognizes the need to gather data after students leave to use as a benchmark to guide continual program development for student success.

The school leadership and staff meet weekly, and short-term and long term goals for program development, staff development, and student success are identified and known by staff. The leadership recognizes the need to bring its goals and strategies into an organized School Improvement Plan that addresses the common goals of all of the institution's programs that are designed for student success academically and behaviorally.

The school also has committed resources to a new technology infrastructure and service provider that can meet its bandwidth needs given the school's rural location. The school also has acquired a new technology-based student tracking system to centralized and improve its documentation and communication regarding student progress and coordination of student's individualized program needs.

The External Review Team found Resolution Ranch to be characterized by leadership and staff who are strongly committed to student success and to building and maintaining a unified, collaborative culture in which each student is known and cared for by all staff members. All personnel are committed to maintaining a safe and effective environment, to communicating respectfully and positively, and to enforcing policies and disciplinary practices consistently, and fairly.

The school's leadership already has committed resources to areas of improvement identified during the Self Assessment, including increasing the technology infrastructure and bandwidth, acquiring a more robust student

information system, and developing surveys to track long term student success. Developing a plan to implement the opportunities for improvement and improvement priorities will assist the leadership and personnel in the continuous improvement process. Although the school's education director began the development of a school improvement plan, the school's communication and training plans will benefit significantly from the development of a comprehensive school improvement plan that coordinates all of the school's programs. The school's strongly collaborative and supportive culture should lend itself well to a plan that is developed with contributions from all stakeholders.

Improvement Priorities

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

- Develop, implement, and maintain a comprehensive continuous school improvement plan, including goals, objectives, time lines, and a working budget developed for the uniqueness of the school's mission.
- Increase use of documentation of surveys, intake and exit data, PLATO assessment data, and other data points to establish trends that will highlight areas of success and areas of improvement for the school's program. This data could include graduation rates, college entrance, rates, college completion rates, and other measures as deemed appropriate by the school's leadership. Because of the nature of Resolution Ranch, this data will often be qualitative and narrative in nature. It can be used to help market the program to young men that the school leadership believes it can best serve. Data gathered from such action research could not only inform continuous improvement but could contribute significantly to the body of research that informs practices for therapeutic boarding schools.

Accreditation Recommendation

Index of Education Quality

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

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

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

	External Review IEQ Score	AdvancED Network Average
Overall Score	325.00	282.79
Teaching and Learning Impact	318.75	274.14
Leadership Capacity	340.00	296.08
Resource Utilization	316.67	286.32

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

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

Addenda

Team Roster

Member	Brief Biography
Dr. Marilyn Dardenne	Marilyn Dardenne began her educational career as a Lecturer in the Journalism Department at Texas A&M University. While raising her four children, she taught part time in community programs, community college, and in a home school cooperative program. In 1997, Marilyn entered Christian education as a technology teacher at Northeast Christian Academy in Kingwood, TX. During 11 years at NCA, Marilyn taught a variety of classes, served as the school's network administrator and technology coordinator, then as assistant principal and then secondary principal. Marilyn served as the high school principal for four years at Southwest Christian School in Fort Worth and then as the Chief Administrator for Fellowship Christian Academy in South Oak Cliff for two years. Currently, she is the Media & Technology Chair at Newman International Academy of Arlington. Marilyn has a master's degree in Ed Tech from Texas A&M, a master's in Ed Leadership from Sam Houston State, and holds an Ed.D. in Curriculum & Instruction from Texas Wesleyan University. She teaches graduate education courses online for Concordia Lutheran University-Portland.
Juli Butler	
Terrence Butler	

Next Steps

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

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About AdvancED

AdvancED is the world leader in providing improvement and accreditation services to education providers of all types in their pursuit of excellence in serving students. AdvancED serves as a trusted partner to more than 32,000 public and private schools and school systems – enrolling more than 20 million students - across the United States and 70 countries.

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

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

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