

Report of the External Review Team for Torah Academy of San Antonio

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Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Use of Diagnostic Tools

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

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

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

Index of Education Quality

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

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

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

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

Benchmark Data

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

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

Powerful Practices

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

Opportunities for Improvement

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

Improvement Priorities

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

The Review

The three members of the External Review Team maintained frequent off-site communications prior to the External Review on March 8 and 9. This proved to be very effective and allowed the team to be well prepared to conduct the external review of Torah Academy of San Antonio. The review team spent a great deal of time reading the school's self assessment, summary, and other information to learn more about the school and its programs. Team members talked on the telephone and emailed on a consistent basis to prepare for the review. The Lead Evaluator talked with the principal on numerous occasions and visited the school prior to the accreditation external review. The Lead Evaluator greatly appreciated the excellent information that was provided by the principal and staff. The principal was very engaging and demonstrated his passion for the school and the importance of the external review. The team started the first day by meeting with three different stakeholder groups. The groups included staff members, parents, board members, and other stakeholders. The stakeholders provided a great deal of information about the school and its heritage, the community, and the expectations for the future. These important stakeholders also shared that the school was continuing to make significant progress on strategic efforts. It was also noted that the school needs to continue to increase enrollment and find other sources of financial support. The stakeholders also shared that the school was continuing to make significant progress on strategic efforts with emphasis on assessment and instructional improvement. The review team members were inspired to hear the stories of the stakeholders on how children

and entire families were very supportive of the school because of its unique purpose and mission as well as the quality of the education programs at the school.

After the stakeholder meetings, the principal provided the team members with excellent information and shared his strong vision and support for the mission and purpose of the school and its programs. It was obvious to the team members that his leadership was instrumental in preparing the school for the accreditation process as he has orchestrated improvements to the programs of the school. The team members continued to work with the principal through lunch.

After lunch, some team members began to conduct several classroom observations using the Effective Learning Environments Observation™ (eleot™) while others reviewed the school documents, performance data, and other artifacts that had been carefully and professionally organized by the school staff. The team members continued to meet with the principal and other staff members throughout the day. After each observation in the classroom, the team member conducting the observation met with the teacher to respond to questions as well as to obtain more information about the school and its programs. When the school day ended, the team spent a great deal of time continuing to review the artifacts as well as discussing and assessing the school's performance related to the accreditation standards.

On the second day, the team continued to visit and observe classrooms, interview teachers and staff members and review artifacts. Observing in the classrooms allowed the team to identify and document observable evidence of classroom environments that are conducive to student learning. The review team continued to meet with stakeholders, including students, throughout the day. In addition, the review team continued to work together to summarize information and prepare for the External Review Exit Report as well as the final written report. It was determined that meeting with stakeholders on the following evening, March 10, would provide a better opportunity to provide a complete report and involve more stakeholders in the process. The exit report was given with several stakeholders present. They were very excited to hear the report and asked important questions during and after the presentation.

The External Review Team is very grateful and appreciative for the opportunity to engage with professionals of the Torah Academy of San Antonio through the AdvancED accreditation process. The school is to be commended for its quality work that was done prior to the on-site visit. The documents and artifacts were suitably organized and the review team was provided with information that was needed to conduct the review. Each member of the school community significantly contributed to the accreditation process and assisted the review team in a positive manner. All provided quality information to the team and greatly assisted the team in completing its tasks in a timely manner. The review team is appreciative of the passion and service that is committed to all students on a daily basis. The team is very thankful for the work that is done to continuously improve the practices and resources so that each student can reach the highest level of potential possible.

The External Review Team expresses its most sincere appreciation to the principal, members of the school board, members of the professional staff, students, and parents for their genuine kindness and hospitality that was given to the team throughout the visit. The review team wishes the school and its students much success in the quest for accreditation.

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
Board Members	5
Pastors	2
Administrators	1
Instructional Staff	7
Support Staff	2
Students	7
Parents/Community/Business Leaders	9
Total	33

Results

Teaching and Learning Impact

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

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

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

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

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

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

Standard 3 - Teaching and Assessing for Learning

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
3.1	The school's curriculum provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure all students have sufficient opportunities to develop learning, thinking, and life skills that lead to success at the next level.	3.00	2.81
3.2	Curriculum, instruction, and assessment are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice.	3.00	2.49
3.3	Teachers engage students in their learning through instructional strategies that ensure achievement of learning expectations.	4.00	2.60
3.4	School leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.	4.00	2.70
3.5	Teachers participate in collaborative learning communities to improve instruction and student learning.	3.00	2.57
3.6	Teachers implement the school's instructional process in support of student learning.	3.00	2.57
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs support instructional improvement consistent with the school's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	3.00	2.54
3.8	The school engages families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keeps them informed of their children's learning progress.	4.00	3.06

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
3.9	The school has a formal structure whereby each student is well known by at least one adult advocate in the school who supports that student's educational experience.	4.00	2.98
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.	4.00	2.75
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	4.00	2.53
3.12	The school provides and coordinates learning support services to meet the unique learning needs of students.	4.00	2.61

Standard 5 - Using Results for Continuous Improvement

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
5.1	The school establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.	4.00	2.66
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.	3.67	2.37
5.3	Professional and support staff are trained in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.	3.67	2.06
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.	3.00	2.46
5.5	Leadership monitors and communicates comprehensive information about student learning, conditions that support student learning, and the achievement of school improvement goals to stakeholders.	3.00	2.71

Student Performance Diagnostic

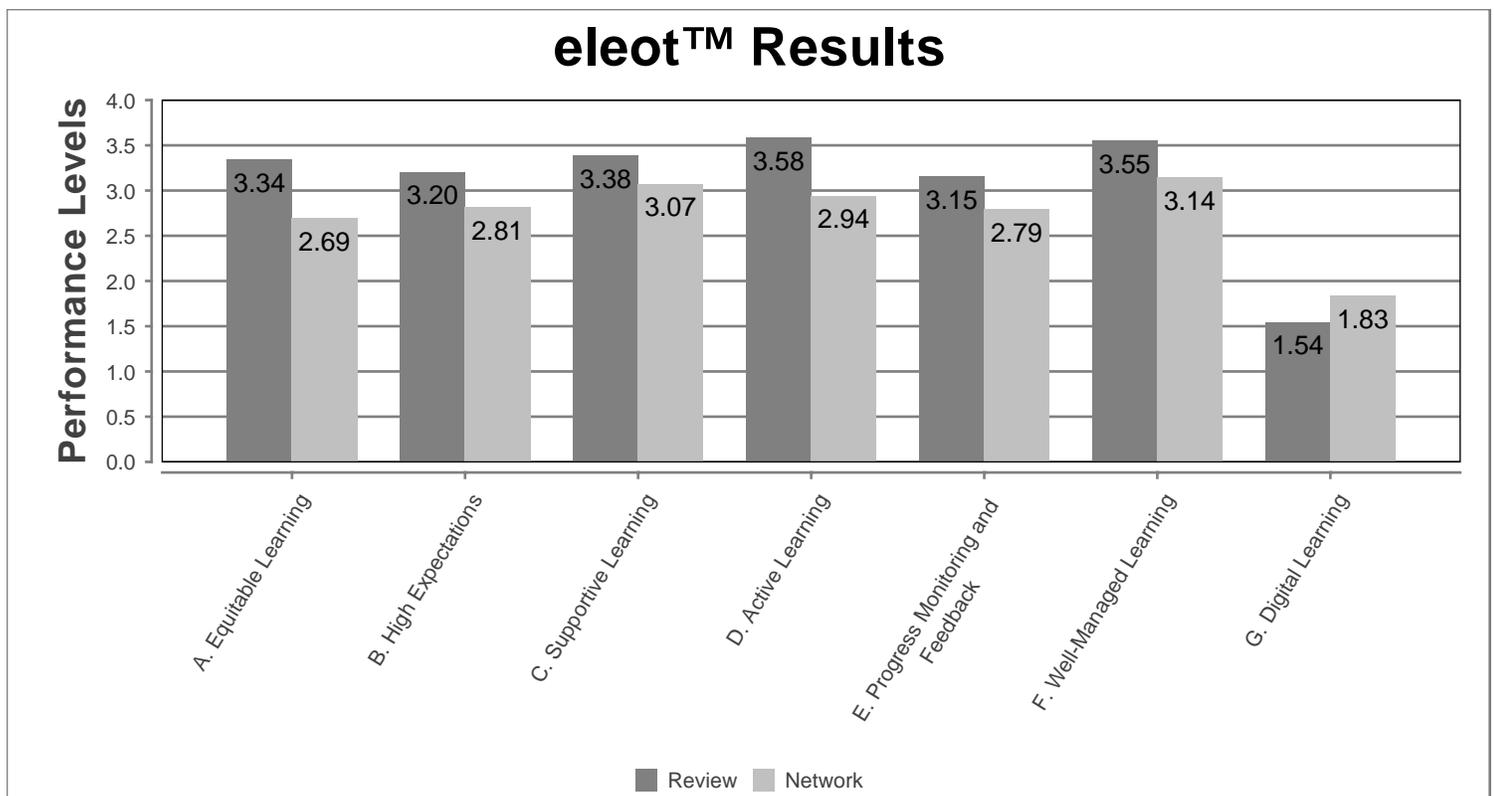
The quality of assessments used to measure student learning, assurance that assessments are administered with procedural fidelity and appropriate accommodations, assessment results that reflect the quality of learning, and closing gaps in achievement among subpopulations of students are all important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

Evaluative Criteria	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
Assessment Quality	3.00	3.06
Test Administration	3.67	3.45
Equity of Learning	4.00	2.70
Quality of Learning	3.67	2.92

Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot™)

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

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



The External Review Team conducted eight observations using the Effective Learning Environment Observation Tool (eleot™). Scores in all domains but one were high, in comparison with the AdvancED network averages® (AEN). Every classroom that was observed had many positive elements identified. The vast majority of the ratings on all items were either "evident" or "very evident." The review team members were very impressed with the work of the teachers that resulted in such positive results.

Scores in each domain were very high ranging from a low of 1.54 in Digital Learning Environment to a high of 3.58 in Active Learning Environment. Other than the lower score in Digital Learning Environment, all of the other domain scores were higher than the AdvancED Network Averages®. This demonstrates that the staff is creating positive learning climates that are engaging and purposeful for student learning at the highest level.

The eleot™ allows observers to identify observable evidence of classroom environments that are conducive to learning. In the classrooms at the school, it was very easy for team members to observe the various components of the eleot™ because the teachers promote active learning environments and create warm and inviting climates with high expectations that challenge students to be highly engaged, creative, and strategic in solving problems or finding solutions to questions or projects. Each classroom seemed to be a laboratory of various discoveries happening at the same time. When students were working in different groups, the group not currently being directed by the teacher was still actively engaged without the supervision. Students openly assisted each other without giving answers to each other. Students regularly seemed to be pleased with what they were doing and excited about the end results of their activities. The results from the use of the eleot™ demonstrated that teachers maintained well-managed and orderly classrooms even when there was a multiplicity of activities occurring in the classrooms.

Students were often observed working with multiple tools such as manipulatives, pencil and paper, and teacher prepared materials. Teachers created assignments that caused students to be creative in their critical thinking and problem solving to be able to complete work. In one large group activity, students respectfully took turns in discussing what they had read independently with their classmates. Many times, team members observed teachers encouraging students to work hard and thoughtfully about what they were doing. Teachers were very helpful but did not provide too much information to the students to allow the students to complete work on their own. Teachers were consistently monitoring the progress of their students and providing positive and purposeful feedback on their learning.

Throughout the school's self assessment, it was indicated that exceptional curricular practices and outstanding resources were applied in each classroom. The self assessment indicated that the school provides a safe and nurturing environment that enables students to develop academic and life skills that will serve them well in the future. During the observations in the classrooms and in discussions with the faculty and staff during interviews, it was determined that a great deal of time and energy is spent in successfully providing a safe and motivating learning environment. The review team members were impressed with how the teachers related to the students and the respect that the students demonstrated to the adults.

The review team members saw very little off-task behavior. Students seemed to be so actively engaged in their academic work that they had no time to be off-task. The students were generally very attentive to the teachers and responded quickly and appropriately when questioned about elements of the lesson. Many high level discussions were observed where students demonstrated highly motivated behavior to learn the material being presented. The eleot™ scores clearly reflected that the teachers had created positive classroom environments that were very conducive to high student engagement that resulted in significant learning.

eleot™ Data Summary

A. Equitable Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.12	Has differentiated learning opportunities and activities that meet her/his needs	37.50%	50.00%	0.00%	12.50%
2.	3.38	Has equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	37.50%	62.50%	0.00%	0.00%
3.	3.38	Knows that rules and consequences are fair, clear, and consistently applied	37.50%	62.50%	0.00%	0.00%
4.	3.50	Has ongoing opportunities to learn about their own and other's backgrounds/cultures/differences	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.34						

B. High Expectations			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.50	Knows and strives to meet the high expectations established by the teacher	62.50%	25.00%	12.50%	0.00%
2.	3.12	Is tasked with activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	12.50%	87.50%	0.00%	0.00%
3.	2.50	Is provided exemplars of high quality work	0.00%	62.50%	25.00%	12.50%
4.	3.38	Is engaged in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks	37.50%	62.50%	0.00%	0.00%
5.	3.50	Is asked and responds to questions that require higher order thinking (e.g., applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	62.50%	25.00%	12.50%	0.00%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.20						

C. Supportive Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.75	Demonstrates or expresses that learning experiences are positive	75.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%
2.	3.62	Demonstrates positive attitude about the classroom and learning	62.50%	37.50%	0.00%	0.00%
3.	2.88	Takes risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	0.00%	87.50%	12.50%	0.00%
4.	3.88	Is provided support and assistance to understand content and accomplish tasks	87.50%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%
5.	2.75	Is provided additional/alternative instruction and feedback at the appropriate level of challenge for her/his needs	0.00%	87.50%	0.00%	12.50%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.38						

D. Active Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.62	Has several opportunities to engage in discussions with teacher and other students	75.00%	12.50%	12.50%	0.00%
2.	3.38	Makes connections from content to real-life experiences	50.00%	37.50%	12.50%	0.00%
3.	3.75	Is actively engaged in the learning activities	87.50%	0.00%	12.50%	0.00%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.58						

E. Progress Monitoring and Feedback			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	2.88	Is asked and/or quizzed about individual progress/learning	0.00%	87.50%	12.50%	0.00%
2.	3.38	Responds to teacher feedback to improve understanding	50.00%	37.50%	12.50%	0.00%
3.	3.62	Demonstrates or verbalizes understanding of the lesson/content	62.50%	37.50%	0.00%	0.00%
4.	2.62	Understands how her/his work is assessed	0.00%	62.50%	37.50%	0.00%
5.	3.25	Has opportunities to revise/improve work based on feedback	37.50%	50.00%	12.50%	0.00%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.15						

F. Well-Managed Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	3.88	Speaks and interacts respectfully with teacher(s) and peers	87.50%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%
2.	3.75	Follows classroom rules and works well with others	75.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%
3.	3.00	Transitions smoothly and efficiently to activities	25.00%	62.50%	0.00%	12.50%
4.	3.62	Collaborates with other students during student-centered activities	75.00%	12.50%	12.50%	0.00%
5.	3.50	Knows classroom routines, behavioral expectations and consequences	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 3.55						

G. Digital Learning			%			
Item	Average	Description	Very Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Observed
1.	1.75	Uses digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	0.00%	0.00%	75.00%	25.00%
2.	1.50	Uses digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	0.00%	12.50%	25.00%	62.50%
3.	1.38	Uses digital tools/technology to communicate and work collaboratively for learning	0.00%	0.00%	37.50%	62.50%
Overall rating on a 4 point scale: 1.54						

Findings

Powerful Practice

Teacher collaboration on curriculum, instruction, and assessment ensures consistency in grading and reporting.

(Indicator 3.10)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.10

Evidence and Rationale

The school has developed clearly defined criteria which teachers are expected to follow. Assessments that are constructed to align with curriculum and instruction reflect students' attainment of knowledge and skills. All teachers consistently implement common grading and reporting policies which are, in turn, regularly evaluated and communicated to stakeholders. The school clearly follows the guidelines outlined in the protocols that are established. Parents and students are informed about how grading and reporting will take place at the beginning of the year or upon entry to the school. In interviews, teachers emphasized the importance of consistency in grading and reporting and discussed numerous ways that the school monitored the grading and reporting process. Parents expressed great appreciation for the school leadership and faculty and specifically mentioned the consistency of operations and procedures in the instructional and assessment process.

Students and parents expect a school to implement a fair and consistent program which includes effective grading and reporting policies and procedures. The fairness and consistency promotes greater communication and support of the school leadership and staff.

Powerful Practice

Teachers systematically plan and regularly use instructional strategies that actively engage students in applying and integrating knowledge and skills, self-reflection, and critical thinking skills.

(Indicator 3.3)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.3

Evidence and Rationale

The External Review Team observed teachers demonstrating unique instructional strategies and interventions to address individual learning needs of each student. It is fortunate that the school is able to provide instruction in a highly personalized manner due to the excellent teacher to student ratio. Teachers use multiple instructional strategies that require students to apply knowledge and skills in a variety of ways. Formative assessments are created and are utilized by teachers on an ongoing basis to modify instruction. Team observations in the classrooms saw students utilizing collaboration and student centered instruction. Teachers used RTI and GT strategies, as appropriate, to ensure that students master the learning objectives.

Schools that plan and use instructional strategies that demand the development of student critical thinking skills, collaboration with other students, and constant student self-reflection, provide greater opportunities for student success in school and in future endeavors.

Powerful Practice

The Torah Academy leadership and staff has developed a strong commitment to provide necessary support services to meet unique or unusual needs of students.

(Indicator 3.12)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.12

Evidence and Rationale

Through interviews, surveys, and observations in the classrooms, the External Review Team members observed that the school leadership and faculty actively seek ways to provide necessary resources and support services for students. Many community resources and volunteers have been procured for students and teachers to provide for the varied needs of students. The school participates in NEISD's Continuation of Services Coop, Jewish Family Services, and a new partnership through a grant with local educational support specialists in PT, OT, and SP, as well as the engagement of LSSPs. Students who consistently demonstrate increased ability in specific subject areas are given pretests before instruction begins to allow for curricular compacting, and are documented through the use of advanced educational plans or AEP's and accommodations/modification forms. It is apparent that the faculty and staff have excelled in communicating proactively about students' needs and certainly not being indifferent to student needs because of lack of resources.

Effective schools continuously seek resources and support services to provide for the individual learning and developmental needs of students to maximize their learning potential.

Powerful Practice

The collaborative efforts of a committed and caring faculty and staff have resulted in a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of every child, giving them academic, social, spiritual and emotional support and the tools to succeed in the future.

(Indicator 3.9)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.9

Evidence and Rationale

The External Review Team noted that the staff recognizes the sense of urgency in addressing student needs. The school staff knows every child very well, even if the child is not in the teacher's class. Each student has at least one adult advocate in the school who supports the student's educational and developmental experience. On a daily basis, the faculty and staff develop relationships with each student through instructional practices. Students have the opportunity to set goals with their general studies classroom teacher. The Judaic Studies are taught by highly qualified, Shomer Shabbat educators with many years of experience. The CHAMPS and Restorative Discipline behavioral programs actively engage the students in a positive manner. The school creates opportunities for students to engage in learning opportunities with various students and staff during center activities and project work. Students told team members that they respect and appreciate their teachers. Because students know how much their teachers care, they respect the academic learning environment and said they are appreciative of the interest shown in them.

Caring and nurturing school environments provide children with the best opportunities to express themselves and learn with fear of stress as they develop strong academic and spiritual values and knowledge.

Powerful Practice

The leadership of the school regularly monitors instructional practices of teachers and supports the ongoing development and improvement of instructional practices.

(Indicator 3.4)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.4

Evidence and Rationale

The school principal and faculty promote high expectations for student learning by using multiple approaches to teaching. The leadership regularly monitors instructional activities in the classrooms to ensure that best practices are employed. Numerous professional development opportunities are made available to teachers to support their ongoing improvement of instruction. In discussions with teachers, they indicated that they had the necessary curriculum and instructional materials to implement successful instruction. They also indicated that

they receive excellent support from the school leadership and are encouraged to develop new strategies and techniques to increase student engagement and performance. The principal collaborates with his lead teacher to ensure that they are monitoring instructional practices daily. Both the principal and the lead teacher work closely with teachers to model and mentor teachers.

It is vitally important for school leaders to systematically monitor instruction on a daily basis to consistently improve instruction. Daily input and feedback provides professionals with the opportunity to evaluate their own work and then compare it to the quality feedback from others. Effective schools see the importance of this process and place a great deal of emphasis on it.

Powerful Practice

The school effectively uses a variety of avenues to communicate information to stakeholders about students, their performance, and school effectiveness.

(Indicator 3.8)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.8

Evidence and Rationale

In interviews, parents expressed great appreciation for the excellent communication that the school provides them about their students and the activities and programs of the school. Parents have been effectively engaged through a variety of strategies and techniques. The school incorporates the use of Edmodo online, newsletters, parent centers, academic nights, open house, teacher websites, weekly updates through emails, daily agendas, impromptu conferences, progress reports, homework "try again" when mastery grading is not met. In addition, Friday Kabbalat Shabbat talks, early release days, and surveys are used to facilitate communication. Regular volunteer opportunities, PTO programs, room parents and field trip chaperones provide a multitude of opportunities for parents and stakeholders to regularly engage with the school staff and programs of the school. Parents are very responsive to school officials and are happy to provide leadership and active engagement in school activities and fundraisers. The review team was very impressed with the number of parents who come to the school with their students and informally visit with staff on a regular basis.

Effective schools promote excellent communications with stakeholders and provide family members and other community members with the opportunity to become actively engaged in the school to promote the success of the programs of the school and better educational opportunities for students.

Powerful Practice

The school leadership has provided multiple opportunities for teachers to be actively engaged in various and consistent professional learning experiences.

(Indicator 3.11)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 3.11

Evidence and Rationale

Through interviews and observations, review team members learned that the leadership and faculty are strongly committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that teachers actively participate in substantial, on-going professional development and collaborative learning experiences in order to enhance the quality of performance and knowledge of the mission. Through the interviews, the review team found that the faculty and staff of the school are passionate about continuing to learn and improve their skills to enhance teaching strategies that will lead to even greater student success. The school has made significant strides to improve the financial support for professional development. There is even more desire for further professional development to further expand teaching strategies, techniques and methods. Review team members learned in their discussions with teachers the teachers are actively studying various strategies such as collaborative learning communities to expand techniques, strategies, and methods. The research is significant in demonstrating that collaborative learning experiences are highly effective in promoting successful professional development. The school has developed tiered levels of Professional Development Support. The school has partnered with NEISD on a needed assessment and has also used Region 20 ESC for strong resources.

Through consistent professional development opportunities, quality schools are better able to develop a dynamic learning climate with multiple or varied instructional practices or delivery systems in the classroom to ensure that students' various learning styles are addressed and that as a result, students are actively engaged in learning.

Powerful Practice

Torah Academy establishes and maintains a clearly defined and comprehensive student assessment system.

(Indicator 5.1, SP1. Assessment Quality)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 5.1

Evidence and Rationale

The External Review Team commends Torah Academy's personnel for maintaining and consistently using a comprehensive assessment system that produces data from multiple assessment measures, including locally developed and standardized assessments about student learning and school performance. The data was clear that the school uses a wide array of quality assessments to ensure that instruction is aligned with student needs. The system ensures consistent measurement across all classrooms and courses. It was clear that the principal's data decision making and hands-on approach provides much guidance and alignment to the entire process. All assessments were proven reliable and bias free. The evidence demonstrated that the system was regularly and systematically evaluated for reliability and effectiveness in improving instruction, student learning, and the conditions that support learning.

Successful schools realize the importance of continuous classroom improvement and, using reliable and significant assessment data, look forward to systematically engaging the staff and students in the entire process.

Powerful Practice

Torah Academy's 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.

(Indicator 5.2, SF2. Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis , SP2. Test Administration)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 5.2

Evidence and Rationale

The External Review Team noted ample evidence that the leadership team and faculty have done an exemplary job of continuously collecting, analyzing, and applying learning from various data sources. There was evidence of the use of formative and summative assessments, proprietary and published, criterion and norm-referenced assessments, as well as survey data. With the small teacher to student ratio, faculty and staff micro-manage the learning process to where every student is given ample attention and intervention. The data conclusively showed that faculty and staff effectively implement a variety of quality instruments, and use them to advance instruction and intervention resulting in clear evidence of growth of the whole child.

Effective schools continuously seek data sources to assist them in the evaluation of their students' performance as well as in the continuous improvement of school programs and activities to maximize the learning of students.

Powerful Practice

Torah Academy's professional and support staff members are regularly and systematically assessed and trained in a rigorous, individualized professional development program related to the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.

(Indicator 5.3, SP4. Equity of Learning)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 5.3

Evidence and Rationale

The school leadership is to be commended for the amount of supervision and development provided to the teachers. There was clear, ample, and compelling evidence of ongoing training in the latest pedagogical research strategies for all of the faculty and staff. The External Review Team noted that the data-driven decision making was amply evident in use of PDAS teacher evaluations twice per year, rather than the once required by the program, along with corresponding professional development opportunities. Ample evidence was provided of formal and informal professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, such as;

CHAMPS, Positive Behavior Support (PBS), My Child, My Disciple, How to Listen so Kids will Speak, How to Speak So Kids will Listen, Restorative Discipline, Boystown, and Specialized Classroom Management Model. There was evidence of accountability where teachers were assigned growth plans, as well as a few who were dismissed due to an inability to perform duties or meet the standards of the school.

Successful schools realize the importance of providing all staff members with continual professional growth opportunities in the area of evaluation, interpretation, and use of data in order to establish a school focus on student performance and school improvement programs.

Leadership Capacity

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

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

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

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

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

Standard 1 - Purpose and Direction

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
1.1	The school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for student success.	3.00	2.73
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.	4.00	2.96
1.3	The school's leadership implements a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support student learning.	4.00	2.56

Standard 2 - Governance and Leadership

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
2.1	The governing body establishes policies and supports practices that ensure effective administration of the school.	4.00	2.96
2.2	The governing body operates responsibly and functions effectively.	2.00	2.91
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.	2.00	3.15
2.4	Leadership and staff foster a culture consistent with the school's purpose and direction.	3.00	3.09
2.5	Leadership engages stakeholders effectively in support of the school's purpose and direction.	4.00	2.79
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice and student success.	4.00	2.74

Stakeholder Feedback Diagnostic

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

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

Evaluative Criteria	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
Questionnaire Administration	4.00	3.35
Stakeholder Feedback Results and Analysis	4.00	3.04

Findings

Improvement Priority

Evaluate the current governance procedures and processes to ensure that the school board provides autonomy to the school leadership to manage day-to-day operations and meet the mission and purpose of the school through strong Judaic and Secular academic programs.

(Indicator 2.3)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 2.3

Evidence and Rationale

Much credit must be given to the Torah Academy School Board for accepting and meeting the challenges that have been presented to the school during its first three years of operation. The External Review Team members were very impressed with the dedication of the board members to the mission and purpose of the school. In interviews, review team members saw how much time and effort was given by board members to enable the school to meet multiple challenges and obstacles. The majority of the success that has been achieved at the school would not have been possible without the support and direction of the school board. In interviews with faculty and staff members, it became obvious to the review team members that there is a moderate degree of discomfort in regard to the involvement of the board members in the day-to-day operations of the school. Some staff members are reluctant to ask for needed supplies because they must go through the board rather than through the school leadership. In interviews, some board members stated that they realized the board was exercising more control than it should and that it needed to give the school leadership more opportunities to manage various operations of the school. Some board members felt that this control was necessary during the early years of the school,

Successful schools have well organized practices and procedures of governance that demonstrate a clear line of authority and clear outlines that show the distinct roles of the board and school leadership.

Opportunity For Improvement

Monitor and evaluate how the board functions in regard to operational procedures with the school. Board members have a strong commitment and a genuine interest in the school's programs but there appears to be improvement needed in how the board functions with the school.

(Indicator 2.2)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 2.2

Evidence and Rationale

School board members have a strong commitment and a genuine interest in the school's programs but there appears to be improvement needed in how the board functions with the school. The board members each strongly support the spiritual and academic missions of the school, as well as its various programs. Through documents and observations, the External Review Team observed that the leadership team and faculty respect and admire the board members for their commitment to the school. However, several examples were given or discovered by the review team such as budgetary processes and procurements being very arduous and time consuming. Staff members also expressed some concern about having to deal directly with board members instead of school leadership.

Effective schools need to be supported by strong governing bodies that establish healthy organizational policies and procedures and support practices of the school to meet the mission and purpose of the school.

Powerful Practice

Board members and school leadership consistently communicate with varied stakeholders to ensure that the community is actively engaged in the support of the school and its efforts for continuous improvement in the school programs.

(Indicator 2.5, SF1. Questionnaire Administration)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 2.5

Evidence and Rationale

The board and the leadership of the school are active in the community to promote the purpose of the school and to inform all stakeholders on how they can support the school and shape the decisions that are made in the best interest of the school. Through various programs and activities such as fundraisers, school publications, parent meetings, and a variety of other opportunities, community members are provided with the opportunity to become actively engaged in the school and to provide input to improve the quality of the programs. The leadership, faculty, and board attempt to effectively exchange information with different representatives from various groups in order to shape decisions collaboratively toward school improvement.

This has resulted in stakeholders making their roles more meaningful, measurable and engaging as they have increased their sense of ownership in the school. As a result of the work of the leadership, faculty, and stakeholders, the greater San Antonio community and the educational community in the surrounding areas have developed a very positive regard and appreciation for Torah Academy of San Antonio.

An active school community with engaged stakeholders provides a powerful force for continuous support of the leadership and faculty of the school in efforts to improve all programs of the school.

Powerful Practice

The leadership and faculty of the school are committed to continuous improvement of the instructional processes in the school through ongoing supervision and evaluation and purposeful staff development activities.

(Indicator 2.6)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 2.6

Evidence and Rationale

The principal has lead the faculty through a systematic process of supervision and evaluation that ensures the instructional program is continually improving. New measures continue to be implemented to improve the instructional process. Improving professional practice and ensuring deep levels of student learning to increase academic, social, and emotional performance and achievement are key aspects of the school's continuous improvement process. Using the PDAS system, the principal evaluates the staff twice annually to manage school improvement efforts and to address revising job specific criteria. Various instructional strategies have been implemented that focus learning on student engagement rather than on teacher performance. The culture of the school is consistent with the school's purpose and mission and aligns the decisions or actions toward continuous improvement. The school faculty and staff consistently work as a collaborative unit involving stakeholders who work toward the school's vision of raising achievement levels for all students.

In effective school, it is essential that the leadership of the school implement and maintain a strong supervision and evaluations process to ensure that teachers are actively engaging students and using the most successful instructional processes possible. Without effective instruction, based on best practice research principles, a quality instructional program cannot be implemented or maintained and student learning will not be maximized.

Powerful Practice

The school board for Torah Academy has worked diligently to establish sound practices and financial support that will enable the school to move forward though challenging start up years to a bright future.

(Indicator 2.1)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 2.1

Evidence and Rationale

Effective board policies and practices have been put in place to provide for a stable and ongoing developmental process as the school attempts to grow and add enrollment. Board members are passionate about the purpose and mission of the school and want to provide the best educational experience possible for all students. Various committees have been established such as the education, financial, marketing, and curriculum committees to better support the school and its programs. It appears that there is a great deal of respect between the school leaders and the members of the board. The review team members felt that the school board members were excited about the AdvancED accreditation process because they want to see the school improve in all areas.

Effective schools need the support and direction of governing bodies who help communicate the purpose and mission of the school and who find ways to support the school and provide necessary resources for growth and improvement.

Powerful Practice

The school leadership and staff are actively engaged in reviewing, revising, and communicating the goals, objectives, and instructional strategies of the school's programs and activities to be able to provide outstanding learning experiences for all students that will prepare them for further education and success in life.

(Indicator 1.2)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 1.2

Evidence and Rationale

Through observations, interviews, and surveys, the External Review Team saw that the leadership of Torah Academy of San Antonio (TASA) has communicated to all groups of stakeholders the school's purpose of providing a healthy balance of vibrant and challenging academics for both Judaic and Secular studies. It is the firm belief and mission of the school that this program of excellence will prepare students for the challenges that lie ahead in the classroom and in life. The school was created in 2013 to provide Jewish children in San Antonio a secure sense of identity and culture through high quality educational programs while also instilling in them strong Torah values, ethics, and character traits. The staff has shown fidelity to the mission and purpose of the school and has researched and implemented successful instructional practices for all grade levels. The entire school community is dedicated to student success through the positive educational and spiritual culture that has been created to meet the physical, emotional, and educational needs of the students.

Stakeholder involvement and understanding of the school's purpose, direction, and goals is essential to the success implementation of the school's initiatives and strategies.

Powerful Practice

The school's leadership and faculty have worked together to create an environment of exemplary success by providing clear direction for staff and students on how to pursue excellence in all areas of importance.

(Indicator 1.3)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 1.3

Evidence and Rationale

The review team members were very impressed with the consistent discussion of excellence in student learning in interviews with all stakeholders. The school has provided multiple opportunities to communicate its message of quality and high performance and stakeholders have responded extremely well to this. It is a common topic in staff meetings, PLCs, surveys, teacher evaluations, and in various parent and community meetings. The school has worked hard to maintain accountability with the Jewish Federation's Planning and Allocation's Committee for pursuing these strong standards. The school board has established education, marketing, financial, and curriculum committees to support the school and its programs. The school plays an instrumental role as the only Jewish private day school in San Antonio and South Texas. The mission of providing a solid and meaningful foundation for Jewish learning has uplifted the Jewish Community and provided a viable option for Jewish families looking at relocating to San Antonio. The school's strong mission and purpose has provided it with the strength and support of stakeholders to face many unique challenges that have strengthened the community through the process.

It is essential for effective schools to implement a continuous improvement process that provides a clear direction for reaching the highest goals possible to allow students to reach their maximum potential and growth.

Powerful Practice

The school's leadership and faculty have worked together to create an environment of exemplary success by providing clear direction for staff and students on how to pursue excellence in all areas of importance.

(Indicator 1.3)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 1.3

Evidence and Rationale

The review team members were very impressed with the consistent discussion of excellence in student learning in interviews with all stakeholders. The school has provided multiple opportunities to communicate its message of quality and high performance and stakeholders have responded extremely well to this. It is a common topic in staff meetings, PLCs, surveys, teacher evaluations, and in various parent and community meetings. The school has worked hard to maintain accountability with the Jewish Federation's Planning and Allocation's Committee for pursuing these strong standards. The school board has established education, marketing, financial, and curriculum committees to support the school and its programs. The school plays an instrumental role as the only Jewish private day school in San Antonio and South Texas. The mission of providing a solid and meaningful foundation for Jewish learning has uplifted the Jewish Community and provided a viable option for Jewish families looking at relocating to San Antonio. The school's strong mission

and purpose has provided it with the strength and support of stakeholders to face many unique challenges that have strengthened the community through the process.

It is essential for effective schools to implement a continuous improvement process that provides a clear direction for reaching the highest goals possible to allow students to reach their maximum potential and growth.

Resource Utilization

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

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

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

Standard 4 - Resources and Support Systems

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

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.1	Qualified professional and support staff are sufficient in number to fulfill their roles and responsibilities necessary to support the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program.	3.00	2.95
4.2	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the school.	3.00	2.96
4.3	The school maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all students and staff.	3.00	3.11
4.4	Students and school personnel use a range of media and information resources to support the school's educational programs.	1.67	2.78
4.5	The technology infrastructure supports the school's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	2.00	2.52

Indicator	Description	Review Team Score	AdvancED Network Average
4.6	The school provides support services to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of the student population being served.	3.00	2.81
4.7	The school provides services that support the counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning needs of all students.	3.00	2.75

Findings

Improvement Priority

Evaluate the school's need for technology and add additional equipment, software, media, and other resources needed by students and teachers to provide more varied means for effective digital learning opportunities.

(Indicator 4.5)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 4.5

Evidence and Rationale

The External Review Team noted that the technology infrastructure meets the essential teaching, learning, and operational needs of most stakeholders. Torah Academy's leadership is to be commended for funneling their resources toward the more critical aspects of teaching, learning, and academic support. The leadership team has successfully acquired grants, support from the Jewish Federation, Region 20 Education Service Center, North East ISD, and several fundraisers to offset revenue limitations as a result of limited enrollment. With the resources available, the leadership has incrementally added technology to the curriculum. It was observed that all stakeholders have adequate access to some digital technology. At the same time, evidence shows that hardware and software that are needed to provide full functionality of the school were either inadequate or missing. In addition, although the school provided a technology implementation plan that addressed the use of currently available technology, no written plan was available that contained the necessary detail to acquire the much needed hardware and software. Although budget proposals were provided that had a generic category for equipment, the specific technology plan was limited.

Changes and advancements in technology, equipment, software, and other media happen at a very fast pace. It is essential that effective schools have a plan to continually review the existing needs of teachers and students to provide for continuous improvement of the school programs.

Opportunity For Improvement

Expand the range of media and information resources that are used to support the school's educational programs.

(Indicator 4.4)

Primary Indicator

Indicator 4.4

Evidence and Rationale

The evidence was clear that all stakeholder groups saw the need to expand available technology. The External Review Team observed evidence that school administration prioritized the acquisition of the most essential hardware and software available for the classrooms. All classrooms were provided with LCD projectors as well as computers for teachers to use. There was a tech lab available to students. The school is to be commended for providing instruction in the use of technology in the tech lab as well as provided a professional tech staff member to work with students and teachers. At the same time, the data showed only teachers using digital technology in the classes. There was little evidence of the technology being used by the students as a part of integration into the curriculum. Clear evidence was provided that the functions of the school information system (SIS) was limited and did not provide the variability needed to adequately support all school functions.

With the rapid proliferation of technology used in high schools, colleges, businesses, and industries it is essential that the school focus on use of a variety of media and information resources in the delivery of education, especially those used later in the students' education.

Conclusion

The Shmuel Bass Torah Academy of San Antonio is the only Jewish private day school in San Antonio and South Texas. It currently serves 41 students in Kindergarten through Grade Seven. The school is located on the Rodfei Sholom grounds. Rodfei Sholom is an Orthodox synagogue with a membership of over three hundred families. It is obvious that the school serves a very important purpose in the Jewish community. The school serves a diverse set of families with different interests, socioeconomic, cultural backgrounds and Jewish observance. The school's program is a healthy balance of vibrant and challenging academics for both Judaic and Secular studies. The stakeholders strongly believe that these are both complimentary and vital in preparing students for the challenges that they will encounter in the years to come. The whole design of the school is based on this philosophy and strategy.

The school was created in 2013 to provide Jewish children in San Antonio with a secure sense of identify and culture through high quality educational programs while also instilling strong values, ethics, and character traits in them. The education of the school is lead by a very compassionate and highly trained group of professional teachers and staff that work diligently to ensure excellence for all students. The highly qualified staff purposefully interacts with all students each day. All teachers are Texas certified educators and most have Master's Degrees. The General Studies are focused on providing each child with an in-depth, cutting-edge, differentiated education to bring each student to his/her highest potential. The Judaic Studies are taught by highly qualified, Shomer Shabbat (Jewishly observant) educators with many years of experience. The curriculum is taught in a manner that inspires and educates the students while it strives to build the necessary skills for the study of Jewish traditions in an environment that encourages strong morals and values.

The school was created to fill a void that was left after the closing of the previous Jewish Day School in San Antonio. The school has established partnerships with other Jewish Day organizations such as Torah Mesorah, became an agency of the Jewish Federation of San Antonio, and have become the recipients of financial grants. The school and its stakeholders are making every effort to be an integral part of the Jewish community and to serve it through providing outstanding and high level education for all students who attend the school.

The Judaic Studies curriculum at Torah Academy provides Jewish students the opportunity to study Judaic Studies in the age-old Mesorah Tradition of Torah Study. Based on the values of the Torah and the teachings of the Chazal, the Judaic Studies program provides students with a systematic approach to Judaic Studies in both the spiritual realm as well as in the educational arena. The students are taught by Torah observant teachers who live what they teach every day. They are outstanding role models for the students.

The school uses multi-age classrooms as a pedagogical philosophy that provides teachers with the ability to maximize each student's potential academically, socially, emotionally, spiritually, and culturally. The staff firmly believes and acts on the belief that all students individually progress at different rates. The school focuses on individual student's progress and learning profile to achieve success. Students are pre-tested at the beginning of each unit or lesson to determine if a student has mastered the objective. Those students who demonstrate mastery have their curriculum compacted through differentiated instructional strategies such as

tiered instruction.

The school and its major stakeholders have already faced and met many challenges in founding the school. There were a number of reasons why the previous private Jewish Day School had closed and many of the reasons continued to provide problems for the founders of the school. The school board and other stakeholders have worked tirelessly to build bridges to vital organizations and entities in the community. In addition, it is very costly to provide a private education for a small group of students while providing an outstanding educational program. While the school only charges tuition of approximately \$8,500 per year, the per student cost to provide the education is approximately \$12,000. While the school has procured grant funds from The Jewish Federation of San Antonio, it is not enough to cover all the costs. This means that the school needs to continue to raise funds and secure long term donor support in order to provide adequate funding for the school. The school needs additional funds to expand existing programs and to create new programs and activities to meet student interests and needs. The school also desires to expand to the 8th grade next year and to continue to add grades to provide a full program for students at least through middle school years. More growth certainly brings more challenges; however, the school board members and school leadership, together with the other stakeholders, appear to be ready to meet these challenges with great enthusiasm. The school and its stakeholders are encouraged to forge an even stronger relationship and better communication process to be able to meet these challenges of the future.

The External Review Team strongly encourages the leadership, staff, and stakeholders to follow the sound practices that have been established at the school. The review team encourages all participants to maintain fidelity to the purpose and mission of the school and to continue to improve the governance structure so that there is an effective communication process and strong working relationship between all essential parties. Involving and engaging students and parents in the activities of school improvement will broaden and deepen the relationship of the stakeholders with the school and its mission. The school is again congratulated on its emphasis on continuous improvement and on the excitement and ownership that all faculty, staff, and stakeholders display in the process of improvement. Although the majority of the students are highly successful at the school, the leadership of the school and the faculty are passionate about continuous improvement of the school and its programs. The two Improvement Priorities that were identified by the review team came from the school's self assessment and through conversations with leadership and faculty. The school's many strengths, as seen through the many Powerful Practices that have been identified in the report, are the basis for the continuous improvement. Using the school's strengths will certainly empower the stakeholders to make even greater gains and improvements. Although it is often difficult to find resources to greatly improve the school's technology, the review team strongly encourages the school to make the necessary improvements in this area. It is also very important to address the governance area which will be vital to improve the school's programs, build a strong financial base, and increase community awareness of and involvement in the school

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:

- Evaluate the current governance procedures and processes to ensure that the school board provides autonomy to the school leadership to manage day-to-day operations and meet the mission and purpose of the school through strong Judaic and Secular academic programs.
- Evaluate the school's need for technology and add additional equipment, software, media, and other resources needed by students and teachers to provide more varied means for effective digital learning opportunities.

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	336.75	278.34
Teaching and Learning Impact	355.56	268.94
Leadership Capacity	345.45	292.64
Resource Utilization	266.67	283.23

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. Gary L Short	Dr. Gary Short has been a professional educator for 44 years. He has served as a classroom teacher, counselor, assistant principal, middle school and high school principal, director of curriculum and instruction, and superintendent. He served as the chairman of the education department at Texas Lutheran University where he was also honored to be the Jo Murphy Distinguished Chair of Education. He was named professor of the year during his final year at TLU. He has been with Southwest Preparatory School and Southwest Winners Foundation since their beginning in 1998. He looks forward to new challenges and opportunities. He is thrilled to be an active part of AdvancED and fully support its mission and objectives. It is an honor for him to be part of this tremendous professional organization.
Mr. Bob Bryant	Bob Bryant has served private school education for over thirty years. He is currently the Academic Dean at San Marcos Academy, where he served for 15 years. He is a doctoral candidate at Regent University, slated to finish the dissertation in October of 2016.
Ms. Sherry Head	Sherry Head is a passionate educator with 20 years of experience. Mrs. Head was a teacher and coach for 11 years before moving into administration. She has been in administration for 9 years where she has served as an Assistant Principal, a Principal, and a Superintendent. She currently serves as the Director of Curriculum for Southwest Preparatory School.

Next Steps

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

About AdvancED

AdvancED is the world 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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