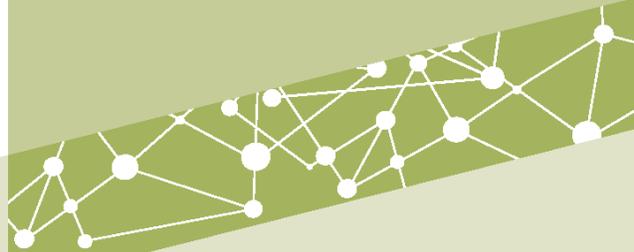


April 8 – 11, 2018



AdvancED® Engagement Review Report



AdvancED® Performance Accreditation

Results for:

Laurel Public School System
410 Colorado Avenue
Laurel, Montana, 59044

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Introduction

AdvancED Performance Accreditation and the Engagement Review

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

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

As a part of the Engagement Review, stakeholders were interviewed by members of the Engagement Review Team to gain their perspectives on topics relevant to the institution's learning environment and organizational effectiveness. The feedback gained through the stakeholder interviews was considered with other evidences and data to support the findings of the Engagement Review. The following chart depicts the numbers of persons interviewed representative of various stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder Groups	Number
Principals	7
Teachers	46
Students	54
Parents and Community Partners	9
Board Members	3
Superintendent and Central Office Administrators	3
Support Staff	9
Total	131

Once all of the information is compiled and reviewed, the team develops the Engagement Review Report and presents preliminary results to the institution. Results from the Engagement Review are reported in four ratings represented by colors. These ratings provide guidance and insight into an institution's continuous improvement efforts as described below:

Color	Rating	Description
Red	Needs Improvement	Identifies key areas that need more focused improvement efforts
Yellow	Emerging	Represents areas to enhance and extend current improvement efforts
Green	Meets Expectations	Pinpoints quality practices that meet the Standards

Color	Rating	Description
Blue	Exceeds Expectations	Demonstrates noteworthy practices producing clear results that exceed expectations

AdvancED Continuous Improvement System

The AdvancED Continuous Improvement System (CIS) provides a Systemic fully integrated solution to help institutions map out and navigate a successful improvement journey. In the same manner that educators are expected to understand the unique needs of every learner and tailor the education experience to drive student success, every institution must be empowered to map out and embrace their unique improvement journey. AdvancED expects institutions to use the results and the analysis of data from various interwoven components for the implementation of improvement actions to drive education quality and improved student outcomes. While each improvement journey is unique, the journey is driven by key actions. AdvancED identifies three important components of a continuous improvement process and provides feedback on the components of the journey using a rubric that identifies the three areas to guide the improvement journey. The areas are as follows:

Commitment to Continuous Improvement	Rating
The institution has collected sufficient and quality data to identify school improvement needs.	Emerging
Implications from the analysis of data have been identified and used for the development of key strategic goals.	Emerging
The institution demonstrates the capacity to implement their continuous improvement journey.	Meets Expectations

Continuous Improvement Journey Narrative

The Laurel School District superintendent greeted the External Review Team with a message stressing the importance of a professional peer review to support system efforts to continuously improve in the Laurel Public School System. The superintendent, board, system administrators and teaching professionals recognize the value of feedback and offered total support to the Engagement Review process. This narrative will provide a snapshot of the System’s efforts to meet strategic goals and in addition, implement the adopted framework of AdvancED to ensure continuous improvement in each of its five schools.

The superintendent’s introductory message profiled the AdvancED continuous improvement process which was adopted by the System in 2016. The process is in its second year of implementation and included the use of tools to collect data and offer guidance in data analysis and self-evaluation. The System leadership recognized the need to support the long-term goals set in the 20-year strategic plan while using the AdvancED framework to set short term measurable goals. The strategic plan was developed and implemented in 2010. The process included monitoring the long-term System goals and revising short-term goals based on data that are collected and analyzed to identify what will best meet student needs and increase student learning. The Team found through interviews that in order to continuously improve, there was a need for System leadership to embrace stakeholder input and ensure transparency in all operations of the System.

To ensure the System’s consistent efforts to continuously improve, short term goals based on current and relevant data from sources such as Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test, Montana Behavior Initiative (MBI) surveys, classroom assessments, both formative and summative, and other subgroup data sources were set for yearly review and analysis. After school teams analyzed these data, specific goals were set in areas of identified need. For example, each of the five schools set specific academic goals to be accomplished in their building. The System’s overall academic goal stated: “The number of students meeting established and appropriate academic expectations across the System will increase by 3% or greater as measured by academic data.” From that overall goal statement, each school set their own specific academic goals. Based on the overall outcomes of baseline data, each school will assess progress in reaching their stated goal. The System’s School Improvement Executive Summary noted that even though some data analysis was occurring throughout

the System, the process of data collection, analysis and use was unclear among some staff. Data use was inconsistent across the System. The System recognized the need to offer more professional development opportunities in understanding and using data to assess student growth and program effectiveness.

In support of the continuous improvement process, the System also collected perception and experience data by administering surveys to all stakeholder groups. In the data collection process, System leadership also included academic, behavior, and climate/culture inventories and surveys to continue educating others in the System about the framework and using the tools to evaluate overall growth as a System. These various surveys brought into focus areas that needed to be addressed with all stakeholder groups. Overall the area that continued to come up as a strong need for improvement was that of communication and stakeholder engagement. Interviews with each stakeholder group verified these findings. In many cases, some voiced that even though information and data from external stakeholders was received, there was no evidence this information was being analyzed, applied or taken into consideration during decision making. This was leaving some stakeholders with the perception that there was a lack of transparency and their input had no value to the System.

The Laurel Public School System has many excellent structures in place that support the continuous improvement model. However, the Team found there was a perception among most stakeholders that decisions were made from the top down and there were many inconsistencies and lack of follow through in System initiatives and in planning purposeful and meaningful professional development activities for all staff. Stakeholder communication and engagement were identified among all stakeholder groups as areas needing improvement. This was noted as an Improvement Priority in the findings.

AdvancED Standards Diagnostic Results

The AdvancED Performance Standards Diagnostic is used by the Engagement Review Team to evaluate the institution’s effectiveness based on AdvancED’s Performance Standards. The diagnostic consists of three components built around each of the three Domains: **Leadership Capacity**, **Learning Capacity** and **Resource Capacity**. Point values are established within the diagnostic and a percentage of the points earned by the institution for each Standard is calculated from the point values for each Standard. Results are reported within four ranges identified by the colors representing Needs Improvement (Red), Emerging (Yellow), Meets Expectations (Green), and Exceeds Expectations (Blue). The results for the three Domains are presented in the tables that follow.

Leadership Capacity Domain

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

Leadership Capacity Standards		Rating
1.1	The System commits to a purpose statement that defines beliefs about teaching and learning, including the expectations for learners.	Emerging
1.2	Stakeholders collectively demonstrate actions to ensure the achievement of the System’s purpose and desired outcomes for learners.	Meets Expectations

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

Learning Capacity Domain

The impact of teaching and learning is the primary expectation of every System and its institutions. The establishment of a learning culture built on high expectations for learning, along with quality programs and services, which include an analysis of results, are all key indicators of the System's impact on teaching and learning.

Learning Capacity Standards		Rating
2.1	Learners have equitable opportunities to develop skills and achieve the content and learning priorities established by the System.	Emerging
2.2	The learning culture promotes creativity, innovation and collaborative problem-solving.	Emerging
2.3	The learning culture develops learners' attitudes, beliefs and skills needed for success.	Emerging
2.4	The System has a formal structure to ensure learners develop positive relationships with and have adults/peers that support their educational experiences.	Meets Expectations
2.5	Educators implement a curriculum that is based on high expectations and prepares learners for their next levels.	Emerging
2.6	The System implements a process to ensure the curriculum is aligned to standards and best practices.	Needs Improvement
2.7	Instruction is monitored and adjusted to meet individual learners' needs and the System's learning expectations.	Needs Improvement
2.8	The System provides programs and services for learners' educational future and career planning.	Needs Improvement
2.9	The System implements processes to identify and address the specialized needs of learners.	Needs Improvement

Learning Capacity Standards		Rating
2.10	Learning progress is reliably assessed and consistently and clearly communicated.	Emerging
2.11	Educators gather, analyze, and use formative and summative data that lead to demonstrable improvement of student learning.	Emerging
2.12	The System implements a process to continuously assess its programs and organizational conditions to improve student learning.	Needs Improvement

Resource Capacity Domain

The use and distribution of resources align and support the needs of the System and institutions served. Systems ensure that resources are aligned with its stated purpose and direction and distributed equitably so that the needs of the System are adequately and effectively addressed. The utilization of resources includes support for professional learning for all staff. The System examines the allocation and use of resources to ensure appropriate levels of funding, sustainability, and System effectiveness.

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

Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®)

Results

The eProve™ Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®) is a learner-centric classroom observation tool that comprises 28 items organized in seven environments aligned with the AdvancED Standards. The eleot provides useful, relevant, structured, and quantifiable data on the extent to which students are engaged in activities and/or demonstrate knowledge, attitudes, and/or dispositions that are conducive to effective learning. Classroom observations are conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes. Results from eleot are reported on a scale of one to four based on the degree and quality of the engagement.

eleot® Observations	
Total Number of eleot® Observations	51
Environments	Rating
Equitable Learning Environment	2.90
Learners engage in differentiated learning opportunities and/or activities that meet their needs	2.20
Learners have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, resources, technology, and support	3.59
Learners are treated in a fair, clear and consistent manner	3.57
Learners demonstrate and/or have opportunities to develop empathy/respect/appreciation for differences in abilities, aptitudes, backgrounds, cultures, and/or other human characteristics, conditions and dispositions	2.24
High Expectations Environment	2.69
Learners strive to meet or are able to articulate the high expectations established by themselves and/or the teacher	2.86
Learners engage in activities and learning that are challenging but attainable	2.78
Learners demonstrate and/or are able to describe high quality work	2.51
Learners engage in rigorous coursework, discussions, and/or tasks that require the use of higher order thinking (e.g., analyzing, applying, evaluating, synthesizing)	2.35
Learners take responsibility for and are self-directed in their learning	2.96
Supportive Learning Environment	3.45
Learners demonstrate a sense of community that is positive, cohesive, engaged, and purposeful	3.37
Learners take risks in learning (without fear of negative feedback)	3.18
Learners are supported by the teacher, their peers and/or other resources to understand content and accomplish tasks	3.59
Learners demonstrate a congenial and supportive relationship with their teacher	3.65
Active Learning Environment	2.70
Learners' discussions/dialogues/exchanges with each other and the teacher predominate	2.84
Learners make connections from content to real-life experiences	2.65
Learners are actively engaged in the learning activities	3.12
Learners collaborate with their peers to accomplish/complete projects, activities, tasks and/or assignments	2.18
Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment	2.81
Learners monitor their own learning progress or have mechanisms whereby their learning progress is monitored	2.53
Learners receive/respond to feedback (from teachers/peers/other resources) to improve understanding and/or revise work	2.98
Learners demonstrate and/or verbalize understanding of the lesson/content	3.14
Learners understand and/or are able to explain how their work is assessed	2.61
Well-Managed Learning Environment	3.51
Learners speak and interact respectfully with teacher(s) and each other	3.69
Learners demonstrate knowledge of and/or follow classroom rules and behavioral expectations and work well with others	3.57
Learners transition smoothly and efficiently from one activity to another	3.49
Learners use class time purposefully with minimal wasted time or disruptions	3.29
Digital Learning Environment	1.52
Learners use digital tools/technology to gather, evaluate, and/or use information for learning	1.76
Learners use digital tools/technology to conduct research, solve problems, and/or create original works for learning	1.45

eleot® Observations	
Total Number of eleot® Observations	51
Environments	Rating
Learners use digital tools/technology to communicate and/or work collaboratively for learning	1.33

eleot® Narrative

Over the course of the three-day review, the External Review Team observed in 51 classrooms using the Effective Learning Environment Tool (eleot). All Team members were certified in the use of this instrument. The classroom observations were conducted with a minimum of 20 minutes dedicated to each of the classrooms visited. These observations were conducted over all grade levels and all academic areas and in all five schools in the Laurel Public School System.

The following is a brief narrative for each of the seven learning environments. It is a summary of the findings of the Team based on the scores and discussions around each environment. Specific scores are reflected in the chart above to further enhance the understanding and are provided as a basis for these narratives.

A. Equitable Learning Environment: 2.90

The Team observed few differentiated learning opportunities for most students. The routine schedule included intervention blocks where students had been grouped according to learning levels in reading and math. The Team observed students working on the same worksheets leaving no opportunity for collaboration or discussion. Learners have equal access to classroom discussions, activities, technology and other resources and support. Learners are treated fairly and in a consistent manner. There was very little opportunity to learn about others and their backgrounds due to the lack of collaboration.

B. High Expectations Environment: 2.69

All students were striving to accomplish goals set by the teacher and were very much engaged in the process. There were many worksheets being used in most elementary classrooms and teachers followed up with low level questioning procedures. There were some observations reflecting high expectations as well as providing rigorous and relevant work. For example, the advanced 5th grade reading classes in the middle school had a rigorous and relevant curriculum. The teacher stated during an interview that she uses formative and summative data that lead to demonstrable improvement in student learning. High expectations were observed during this observation for all students. Learners were self-directed and took responsibility for their own learning.

C. Supportive Learning: 3.45

Teachers were highly valued by the students. Teachers and students had positive attitudes about their learning. Interviews with students also verified that student teacher relationships were strong and supportive of each other. These relationships were found to be a priority throughout the System. It was the general feeling that the staff was extremely willing to do whatever it takes for their students to be successful. Students asked questions with no fear of risk and felt supported by their peers and teachers to access resources to accomplish tasks.

D. Active Learning: 2.70

The Team observed very little discussion or collaboration among students. Most student interaction was in response to teacher questions. There were very few opportunities for connection to real-life experiences. There was very little collaboration among peers to accomplish tasks or complete projects. There was very little active learning with technology. In one kindergarten class, they were studying shapes – sphere, circle, cylinder. The teacher stated the learning objectives and had students echo the objectives. She then asked for each student to show the shape that would best roll, stack, and slide. Then the teacher asked that each student hold above their head the shape that would be best to roll. They held up ball and cylinder. They were then asked to hold above their head the shape that would best stack. They held the end of the cylinder with the flat surface. Then, which shape would slide. Each selected the sphere with the flat side and slid it across the floor. Each shape was identified, and students were asked to identify what shapes were called. Each student understood the lesson objective and how each sphere would be used. All were engaged in the activity and were able to understand the

lesson objective. There was limited collaboration in this activity.

E. Progress Monitoring: 2.81

Most students could verbalize lesson assignments and understood content. They were on task and were working to monitor their own progress and complete assignments. When students were asked to talk about their work, most could explain what they were supposed to do and how to do it. They knew what was expected of them and how their work was assessed.

F. Well-Managed classrooms: 3.51

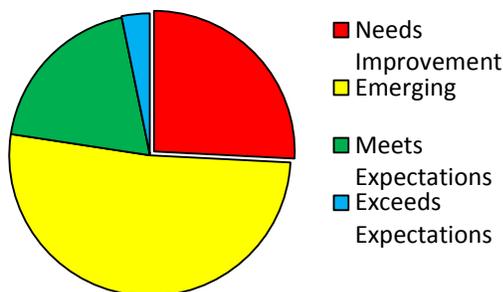
Students were well-behaved and interacted respectfully with the teacher and other students. They made transitions smoothly and routinely. However, there were few transitions to make since there was limited collaboration in the classrooms. Students were very aware of expectation and classroom rules and used structured time wisely and purposefully to accomplish tasks. Students sat in individual desks and worked independently. There were limited group settings and little opportunity to collaborate with peers. Students used time wisely with minimal disruptions and wasted time.

G. Digital: 1.52

Very few students were using computers to learn at a higher level in the middle school. Most of the students using the computers were doing so to create documents, using word processing. In the high school, some classes were using computers at a higher level. While most lessons observed emphasized rote knowledge rather than inquisition or critical thinking, one photography lesson was an exception to this rule. Students were given voice and choice for what to work on for the day. In addition, they were completing a digital “scavenger” hunt, seeking examples of the artistic skills and elements they had been studying on a real photographer’s website and online gallery. Students could work independently or with partners. They could proceed in the order they desired. The teacher provided clearly outlined instructions and requirements via a document on Google Classroom, although a rubric was markedly absent. While high standards were not necessarily obvious, the lesson clearly encouraged student interest and exploration. In addition, a Graphic Design class had a class of 30 large Mac computers with a large class of students that were highly engaged in their projects. Technology was evident in every high school classroom. However, these learners were not using technology to communicate or work collaboratively for learning. Technology was being used for notetaking and research. Even though technology was also evident in middle school classrooms, it was not being used during eleot observations. There was no evidence of the use of technology in the elementary school classrooms.

Findings

The chart below provides an overview of the institution ratings across the three Domains.



Rating	Number of Standards
Needs Improvement	8
Emerging	16
Meets Expectations	6
Exceeds Expectations	1

Powerful Practices

Powerful Practices reflect noteworthy observations and actions that have yielded clear results in student achievement or organizational effectiveness and are actions that exceed what is typically observed or expected in an institution.

Powerful Practice #1

The System has designed and implemented a strong strategic planning process, including long-range goal planning and short-term goal planning to allocate resources in support of the System's purpose and direction

Primary Standard: 3.7 (1.3, 3.8)

Evidence:

The Laurel School System's Quality Factors Diagnostic, a strict strategic plan, budgeting timeline, curriculum review processes, System technology plan and new building/remodeling plan document the System's strategic planning process. This process includes annually monitoring the 20-year strategic plan designed in 2010. The process also includes monitoring the long-term System goals and revising short-term goals which are based around what the System's schools design as goals to increase student learning. The school goals are established according to several data points, including Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments, Montana Behavior Initiative (MBI) surveys, and classroom assessments. Annually the System administration has a retreat as part of the strategic planning process which includes establishing building goals. These goals will then go the school board to be approved and included as part of the System's strategic goals. The System has documented established processes and timelines for budget development, curriculum revisions, and technology planning. The System has also documented facility maintenance and building plans, including the plan for a new school building and remodeling existing structures.

Presentations by the Superintendent and System Administrators also noted that most recently the System has adopted the AdvancED Continuous Improvement Framework to guide their yearly improvement goals. They have determined four goals to set the direction of continuous improvement for the System. Goal 1- Establish goals that are aligned from the classroom to the System levels to guide movement toward a cohesive System. Goal 2 – Use the Eleot observation tool to improve teaching and learning at all schools. Goal 3- Identify goals based on data provided by the Engagement Review in each of the AdvancED standards. Goal 4- Use the AdvancED Engagement Review results to help monitor progress toward student achievement and growth as well as improve instruction in meeting Montana Content Standards. These goals will be monitored and reviewed on a yearly basis.

Opportunities for Improvement

Opportunities for Improvement are those actions that will guide and direct institutions to specific areas that are worthy of additional attention.

Opportunity for Improvement #1

Design and implement a systematic, formalized and documented process for identifying, referring and overseeing progress of all students needing additional assistance, services, and resources that includes a bridge of on-going communication between the Special Education Co-Op, parents, and the System.

Primary Standard:
2.9 (2.7)

Evidence:

Interviews, observations, and lack of documentation verify the need for a plan of ongoing communication between the Special Education Co-Op and the Laurel School System to document student progress and update the instructional staff using formative and summative data to support and monitor the progress of those students

receiving special education services. Observations identified the need to consistently implement effective, individualized strategies that address each learners’ needs based on purposeful planning rather than using practices and curriculum that do not allow for differentiation. Observations and interviews also verified that data were not being utilized for grouping students or individualizing instruction beyond whole groups. There was no evidence that behavior and crisis plans were in place at each building, and there seemed to be a lack of communication and training for TIER 3 behavior procedures.

Improvement Priorities

Improvement priorities are developed to enhance the capacity of the institution to reach a higher level of performance and reflect the areas identified by the Engagement Review Team to have the greatest impact on improving student performance and organizational effectiveness.

Improvement Priority #1:

Develop, implement and regularly monitor a plan to actively engage and establish transparent communications with board, administration and all internal and external stakeholders to inform decision-making.

Primary Standard: 1.8 (1.10)

Evidence:

Universal engagement with stakeholders through two-way communication and multiple access points remains to be the priority for improvement. Internally, transparency and communication prove to be spotted and inconsistent. While all teachers felt supported by their immediate administration, only secondary staff expressed content with their voice in System decisions. Elementary and some middle school staff explained that they were often told what their problems were and how to fix them, rather than being asked. In addition, the System requested their performance of certain curricular or data-reporting tasks with no transparency as to the purpose these actions were meant to serve; more importantly, they were never asked what they felt was best for the students despite their closest ties to the classroom and data. Elementary teachers said that they felt “lumped in” with higher grade levels without equal participation or input. The failed bond in the fall serves as a pointed example of this disconnect between leadership and teachers, as the teachers were presently still uncertain what was being asked of them, what they could say, or how they were supposed to support its passing. Externally, stakeholder engagement also provided room for growth. Many parents and local partners, in interviews, said they had to “push” themselves into the conversation if at all. The board and administration communicate one-way through mailers and the district’s website, and they communicate two-way through board and community meetings as well as personal interactions. However, many parents still feel completely voiceless, especially among families of lower socioeconomic status. Most external stakeholder participation was at the request of the parents or teachers, not administration. No clear transparent communication, for example, was happening between the Special Education co-op and the System. Parents at the elementary level have limited understanding of how their students are doing with Reading Mastery. Head Start and other pre-schools do not have documented, agenda-based two-way cooperation with the kindergarten. Perhaps most importantly, a clear protocol of continued communication was not being employed to help students needing extra support by regularly connecting the student, staff, administration, parents and other resources. Parents have regularly said, “We might not have the best schools, but we have the best teachers.”

Improvement Priority #2:

Develop, implement and consistently monitor a systematic process to ensure that curriculum is clearly aligned both vertically and horizontally, and instruction and reporting mechanisms are aligned to standards and the practiced curriculum.

Primary Standard: 2.6 (2.5)

Evidence:

Interviews with teachers and other documented evidence verified the need to clearly align the curriculum at all levels. The System had adopted a curriculum in reading and math that was consistently implemented throughout the System in grades K-5. However, teachers voiced the need to implement a relevant and rigorous aligned curriculum that provides higher order thinking skills and gives opportunities for more student collaboration and problem solving. Interviews also noted that some alignment was initiated from the System level. However, the follow through to complete the alignment process was not evident. Teachers appear to be frustrated with the lack of consistency and follow through in providing support to offer their students an aligned, relevant and rigorous curriculum across all grade levels. A teacher commented, "Sorry you have to observe us doing so many work sheets. We are just trying to get through the Reading Mastery block." One parent commented, "Reading Mastery works but is very boring." Curriculum maps are in place but are not implemented with fidelity. Interviews noted that more professional development was needed to promote teacher buy in when using curriculum maps. In addition to a clearly aligned curriculum, interviews with teachers and administration expressed the need to resolve conflicting practices such as curriculum that was not aligned to standards when a standards-based report card was being used to report student progress. The curriculum was designed to be reported in percentages rather than being reported at the level of meeting standards. Teachers are adapting reporting procedures to comply with the standards-based report card. These are conflicting practices that may lead to inaccurate information being reported to parents.

Accreditation Recommendation and Index of Educational Quality™ (IEQ™)

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

AdvancED provides the Index of Education Quality™ (IEQ™) as a holistic measure of overall performance based on a comprehensive set of standards and review criteria. A formative tool for improvement, it identifies areas of success as well as areas in need of focus. The IEQ is comprised of the Standards Diagnostic ratings from the three Domains: 1) Leadership Capacity; 2) Learning Capacity; and 3) Resource Capacity and the results of elite classroom observations. The IEQ results are reported on a scale of 100 to 400 and provides information about how the institution is performing compared to expected criteria.

Institution IEQ	270.00
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Conclusion Narrative

The Engagement Review planning process generated opportunities for the Engagement Review Team to engage with a representation of all stakeholder groups in the System. Interviews were held with all five principals and two assistant principals as well as the superintendent and the curriculum director. The Laurel Public School System serves approximately 2,128 students grades K-12 with a general population of ~7300. The major employers in the area were Cenex Harvest States Refinery, Montana Rail Link, Laurel School System, and Wood's Powr-Grip. Laurel was also supported by ranching and farming in the area. Laurel School System has experienced growth in population. This growth has presented the System with the challenge of providing space for additional students. To help alleviate this challenge, the System reconfigured their elementary school grade level designs. They designed an all kindergarten school (South), a first and second grade school (West), a third and fourth grade school (Graff), a five through eighth grade middle school, and a regular nine through twelve high school. This grade level configuration was working. However, this configuration has presented some challenges with curriculum

alignment and smooth transition from one school to the other for elementary students. With the overall growth of the area bringing with it some overcrowding, the superintendent and board proposed an initiative to pass a bond issue to levy taxes for building a new school in the Laurel System. The initiative was launched and a group of stakeholders along with System leadership worked to make the tax initiative a success. Despite the System's efforts, the levy was not successful. In addition to the unsuccessful tax initiative, the industries in the area have protested taxes and as a result, the school system has been unable to receive its portion of taxes. All these factors have put strains on the school budgeting process and have restricted funds needed to make capital improvements and implement plans to relieve overcrowded conditions in schools. A board member commented, "We are doing the best we can with what we have." Other stakeholder groups agreed the board has a budgeting process that effectively uses its resources. The System has established processes and timelines for budget development, curriculum revisions, technology planning, and reviewing facility and maintenance needs. In addition, to relieve an already strained budget, the System participates in the Curriculum Consortium, the Special Education Co-op, and Outsourced food service. These are examples of providing services for students and teachers while using collective resources to effectively and efficiently use finances.

The school System has undergone other challenges as well. In addition to the failed tax initiative, over the last several years Laurel School System has also undergone many changes in leadership. During the last three years, the school System experienced a change of leadership at the System office and school levels. A new superintendent was named in January of 2017 and a new principal was named at the high school and other administrative positions were filled in the System as well. In terms of leadership, administration and the school board are doing quite well given recent turnover. Their annual review and commitment to a strategic plan with pointed vision for the future verified their focus on doing what was best for learners and the people that support them. The school board operates efficiently and effectively in adherence to well-defined policies. At the System level the superintendent, though still relatively new to the position, strives to address the System's greatest needs as they presently seem to be; specifically, this leadership has worked hard to unite the different levels of educational leadership through shared ABC goals differentiated for individual building success. Their greatest room for improvement was in engaging all stakeholders as they had self-assessed. These stakeholders include not just external community members and parents, but also making sure to include the voices of teachers and staff at all grade levels. It also remains to be guided toward improvement by a very strong and structured strategic plan. In addition to very strong and well-defined goals in the strategic plan, the System saw a need to adopt the AdvancED framework to ensure continuous improvement for the System. System leadership found using the AdvancED framework and tools helped all staff embrace the improvement process as well as evaluate instruction and program delivery with a growth mindset. This process helped align practices and enrich discussions from a K-12 perspective. This strong and well-defined strategic plan and use of the AdvancED framework for continuous improvement was noted as a powerful practice for the System.

The External Review Team interviewed various groups of stakeholders. In each group interviewed there was the unquestionable theme of there being a "lack of communication" between the System and various groups of stakeholders throughout the schools and community. This lack of communication between stakeholder groups and the System office has created the perception of mistrust and lack of transparency among school and community stakeholder groups. Interviews with teachers verified that communication between the System office and the schools were inconsistent and vague. For example, one teacher commented, "We are using pre-tests and post-tests, but we don't know what administration is doing with it. MAP generates its own data so why are we duplicating work?" Other teachers noted there was a trend of big concepts or new programs being implemented but the follow through was not always there, so things fell by the wayside. There was some opportunity for parent engagement in school such as PTA Family Fun Night Carnival and a math activities night. However, these engagement outreach activities were not consistent throughout the System. One teacher commented when asked about communication and interaction with the school System, "There is good interaction in the community. It's a small town and there is personal communication. We would like to see a plan and what our role in that plan is. We often get lost because we have no idea what they are thinking." The lack of developing an effective communication network to involve and engage internal and external stakeholders has been identified as an improvement priority in this report.

Although curriculum alignment has been noted as a key focus because of the configurations in elementary grade levels, teacher interviews verified there were inconsistencies throughout grade levels in the vertical alignment most notably in reading and math. Teachers throughout elementary schools voiced that Reading Mastery, while it did meet needs of struggling students, did not have resources to provide the typical and high-end learner with opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills and offer enriched vocabulary. Eleot observations verified this program also does not lend itself to provide opportunities for student collaboration, problem-solving, or cross curricular activities. As one teacher stated, “Reading Mastery is a good program for our struggling readers, but we are not meeting the needs of our other students or challenging them.” The Engagement Review Team found during interviews with staff and students there were negative attitudes about the curriculum among both groups. Teachers felt they have no voice unless their opinions were that of the System leadership. Interviews revealed another area of concern for staff was the inconsistency with the grading and reporting process. Elementary students progress was being reported on a standards-based report card while the curriculum was not aligned to the standards. This inconsistency of alignment lends reporting to be inaccurate and possibly relates to parents’ incorrect information about student progress. Curriculum alignment and conflicting practices in reporting mechanisms were addressed as an improvement priority in the actions section of this report.

As previously noted, the System participates in a Special Education Co-op to help provide services and meet the needs of students with disabilities. Whereas this process of supporting students has been effective, based on interviews and observations the Team found there was little oversight from the System in monitoring and adjusting curriculum to support student progress. It is essential to monitor and oversee the process implemented by the Special Education Co-op to ensure students are progressing and there is ongoing communication informing parents about the students’ progress. In interviews, a teacher commented regarding the student’s IEP, “Parents are grateful for it, but they don’t know what it is.” Building a bridge relationship between the Special Education Co-op, school, and parent is essential and was noted as an opportunity for improvement.

The Engagement Review Team noted in every case, interviews with teachers and students verified that relationships were strong and supportive. A teacher stated, “We will do whatever it takes for our students to be successful.” Based on interviews, students voiced they felt this strong support. Parents also recognized the commitment of teachers to student success. One parent stated, “We may not have the best schools, but we have the best teachers.” The learning culture developed positive attitudes and relationships between the students and staff. Overall the Laurel School System was found to be providing programs and resources for all students. One notable program was the FFA Green House program which allowed students the opportunity to develop an eco-System that provides a variety of plants an environment to grow into beautiful bedding plants and flower baskets. Students were then given the opportunity to offer them for sale to the public. This program was funded by the FFA and was supported by students enrolled in the Career Technical program. There were other Career Technical programs available for students. However, it was also noted by observations and demographic data that it is essential to improve the shop area for Career and Technical Education classes to provide students adequate resources for study and training.

The Laurel School System has undergone many changes over the last few years. As a result, current leadership has seen the need to maintain a very strong strategic plan supported by continuous improvement plans at each school stating specific outcome goals for student improvement. System leadership has committed to improving programs and processes that lead to providing students a variety of opportunities for achievement and future success as well as organizational effectiveness. The Engagement Review Team recognized the system’s commitment toward the continuous improvement process and wishes it well along its improvement journey.

Next Steps

The results of the Engagement Review provide the next step to guide the improvement journey of the institution in their efforts to improve the quality of educational opportunities for all learners. The findings are aligned to

research-based criteria designed to improve student learning and organizational effectiveness. The feedback provided in the Accreditation Engagement Review Report will assist the institution in reflecting on their current improvement efforts and to adapt and adjust their plans to continuously strive for improvement.

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

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

Team Roster

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

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
<p>Dr. Charlotte Draper</p>	<p>After 25 years of service, Dr. Charlotte Draper retired from Shelby County School System as the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction. She served in that position for twelve years. She first started her career in education as a fourth-grade teacher. After earning her Certification in Administration, she became an Assistant Principal and then Principal before going to the Central Office as Assistant Superintendent. Dr. Draper did her under graduate work at the University of Montevallo in Montevallo, Alabama. She received her Master Degree and Education Specialist Degree from the University of Montevallo and received her Doctorate in Education from Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. Dr. Draper is a Facilitator and member of the Oxford Roundtable, Oxford University – St. Anne College, Oxford, England. She received a fellowship in the 2000 Fulbright Educator Program, Tokyo, Japan, and was the recipient of the 1989 Distinguished Teaching Award in Elementary Science awarded by the National Science Teachers Association. She served as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Montevallo and worked with Pearson Prentice Hall Publishing Company as a Curriculum Specialist. Dr. Draper has served on AdvancED System Review Teams for the past eight years. She serves as a Team Member and Lead Evaluator for AdvancED System and school Engagement Review Teams.</p>

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
<p>Dr. Sally Crowser</p>	<p>Dr. Sally Crowser is a learning specialist with Technology and Innovation in Education (TIE) in Rapid City, SD. In that position, she works with school Systems across the region with school improvement at K-12 level. She works with teachers and principals, coaching in all subject areas. She also conducts data analysis in many Systems. She conducts numerous professional developments and conference presentations. Dr. Crowser holds an Ed.D. in Educational Administration, holding certification in both K-12 principal and superintendent. She also has her MA and BA degrees in English/Secondary Education. Dr. Crowser has 24 years of experience as high school English teacher, social science teacher, K-12 principal, K-12 school counselor, and presently learning specialist. She has served as team member and lead evaluator on several AdvancED review teams and has led reviews in her own Systems.</p>
<p>Susie Hedlen</p>	<p>Susie Hedalen received her Bachelors in Elementary Education from Montana State University. She earned a Master of Educational Leadership with a principal and superintendent endorsement in 2012. She received a Graduate Certificate in Native American Studies in 2016 and is currently working on her dissertation to earn her Doctorate in Educational Leadership. Ms. Hedalen’s versatile experience has given her a comprehensive understanding of education and school Systems in Montana. She taught kindergarten through fifth grade in Helena for seven years, she was a rural school superintendent in Grass Range, and most recently, she was an elementary school principal and director of federal programs for the Livingston School System. Using her experience to collaborate with each division within the OPI on the state ESSA plan has been her latest work.</p>
<p>Tammy Hurley</p>	<p>Tammy Hurley is the third to sixth grade principal at Fred Moodry Intermediate in Anaconda, Montana. In that position, she collaborates between administrators, faculty, students, families and the Anaconda Community. Ms. Hurley holds an MS degree in Educational Leadership from Rocky Mountain College. She also holds an MS in Technology from Walden University. Her BA degrees are in Elementary Education and Early Childhood. Ms. Hurley has experience as a teacher and administrator in preschool to grade eighth, as an elementary/middle school teacher and principal. This will be her first AdvancED Engagement Review Team; however, she has been to the AdvancED state trainings.</p>

Team Member Name	Brief Biography
Caitlin Skinner	<p>Caitlin Skinner is a secondary English teacher for the Tier 2 classes at Bozeman High School and Bridger Charter Academy in Bozeman, MT. In addition, Ms. Skinner teaches English III with the Montana Digital Academy. Although she now calls Bozeman home, she has lived in over 10 states, hailing originally from Nashville, TN. Ms. Skinner has an English BA from Grinnell College and a Masters in the Arts of Teaching from Bard College, and she has been teaching for six years. All of her teaching career has been centered around performance-based education and individualized, project-based curriculum that meets student need and interest. Most recently, Ms. Skinner received a Fulbright fellowship in conjunction with the Department of State, called the Teachers for Global Classrooms, which includes a course on globalized learning and a field experience in Colombian schools this summer. Ms. Skinner's favorite part of teaching is developing curriculum and an environment that engage all individuals into a larger sense of purpose and community.</p>

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AdvancED is a non-profit, non-partisan organization serving the largest community of education professionals in the world. Founded on more than 100 years of work in continuous improvement, AdvancED combines the knowledge and expertise of a research institute, the skills of a management consulting firm and the passion of a grassroots movement for educational change to empower Pre-K-12 schools and school systems to ensure that all learners realize their full potential.

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