

AdvancED Accreditation



I've spent the last two days in Lincoln at an AdvancED Accreditation workshop. If you have kept up with your school's news the past couple of years, you probably knew more about it than I did. I believe that I'm now up to speed, and I'm ready to try and explain it in language that everybody can understand.

The Nebraska Department of Education recognizes three levels of schools. First, are the *approved* schools. These are nonpublic, non-accredited schools which meet the basic minimum requirements to be recognized by the state. St. Columbkille Catholic School was classified as an *approved* school for many years. In fact, many of the schools in the Archdiocese of Omaha were and still are classified as *approved* schools. These are commonly referred to as Rule 14 approved schools.

Second, are the *accredited* schools. To be considered *accredited*, schools must meet a higher standard than what the *approved* schools have to meet. All public schools have to meet these standards, and any nonpublic schools that request state accreditation must also meet them. St. Columbkille has been a state accredited school for several years. These are commonly referred to as Rule 10 accredited schools.

The third level is the highest. This is *AdvancED Accreditation*. It is a regional accreditation that has been endorsed by the Nebraska Department of Education. AdvancED is now the premier accrediting body in the country. It has studied the research on hundreds of successful schools and developed a list of five standards based on what successful schools have in common.

1) Purpose & Direction: Successful schools have a purpose and direction that commit to high expectations of learning as well as shared beliefs about teaching and learning.

2) Governance & Leadership: The school operates under governance and leadership that promote student performance and school effectiveness.

3) Teaching & Assessing For Learning: The school's curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices ensure student learning.

4) Resources & Support Systems: The school has resources and provides services that support its purpose to ensure success for all students.

5) Using Results For Continuous Improvement: The school has a comprehensive assessment system and uses the results to guide continuous improvement.

Now you might be thinking, isn't that what all schools do? Well, yes and no. We all do some things that we can list under each of those standards. But, all too often, we put something in place, do it maybe once, and call it good. Then we move on to something else while that great process or practice we put in place slowly fades away. The AdvancED Accreditation process forces us to make these practices and processes an ongoing part of our school system with regular reviews and revisions so that we can continuously improve our school and our students' achievement.

Although this is a somewhat simplified description of the process, I hope it gives you an idea of what we're trying to do. There are a lot of nuances and details involved in those five standards. It involves a lot of work. But, of all the accreditation processes I've been involved in over the years, I think this one holds the most promise for actually being beneficial to the future of our students.

If you have six more minutes watch this video featuring AdvancED CEO Mark Elgart. It will give you some more details about the process we are undertaking.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhjC-T5VxnY>

Yours in Christ,
Jim Makey, Principal