

Report of the
External Review
for
University of Houston Children's Learning Centers

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North Central Association on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC), and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) are accreditation divisions of AdvancED.

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Introduction to the External Review

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

Institutions seeking to gain or retain accreditation must meet AdvancED standards specified for their institution and provide evidence of stakeholder satisfaction with the operation of the institution. The accreditation standards focus on conditions and processes within a system that impact student performance and organizational effectiveness. The power of AdvancED Performance Accreditation lies in the connections and linkages between and among the standards and stakeholder feedback.

Institutions participate in an External Review by a team of highly qualified evaluators who examine the institution's adherence and commitment to the accreditation criteria. The External Review is the hallmark of AdvancED Performance Accreditation as it energizes and equips the leadership and stakeholders of an institution to achieve higher levels of performance and address those areas that may be hindering efforts to reach desired performance levels. External Review is a rigorous process that includes examination of evidence and relevant data, interviews with stakeholders, and observations of instruction, learning, and operations.

The AdvancED External Review Team used the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators and related criteria to guide its evaluation, looking not only for adherence to standards but also for how the institution functioned as a whole and embodied the practices and characteristics of quality.

Using the evidence at their disposal, the AdvancED External Review Team arrived at a set of findings contained in this report. The report is presented in three sections: Findings, Conclusion, and Addenda.

Part I: Findings

The Findings section presents the External Review Team's evaluation of the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators. It includes Powerful Practices and Opportunities for Improvement identified by the External Review Team, as well as evaluations about the Learning Environment, Stakeholder Feedback and Assurances.

Accreditation Standards and Indicators

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

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

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

Average Indicator Score for this Institution	3.28
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Standard 1: The school maintains and communicates a purpose and direction that commit to a sense of community and relationships among young children and adults; developmentally appropriate cognitive, emotional, social, creative, and physical growth and development; as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching, learning, development, and care for young children.

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

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

Standard 1			
The school maintains and communicates a purpose and direction that commit to a sense of community and relationships among young children and adults; developmentally appropriate cognitive, emotional, social, creative, and physical growth and development; as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching, learning, development, and care for young children.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
1.1	The school engages in a systematic, inclusive, and comprehensive process to review, revise, and communicate a school purpose for the care and developmentally appropriate learning, growth, and development of young children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples of communications to stakeholders about the school's purpose (i.e. website, newsletters, annual report, student handbook, enrollment information) Documentation of staff training on research-based developmentally appropriate practices for the care, development, and growth of young children supporting the school purpose and direction Survey results 	3.0
1.2	The school leadership and staff commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching, learning, and care for young children and that also supports a sense of community and relationships among young children and adults to foster within each child a positive sense of self and a capacity to respect and cooperate with others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey results The school's statement of purpose Documentation of research on developmentally appropriate practices for the care, development, and growth of young children supporting the school purpose and direction 	4.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
1.3	The school's leadership implements a continuous improvement process that provides clear direction for improving conditions that support the care for young children and teaching and learning programs that are developmentally appropriate for the growth and development of young children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation Report • Documentation of research on developmentally appropriate practices for the care, development, and growth of young children supporting the school purpose and direction • The school continuous improvement plan 	3.0

Powerful Practices**Indicator**

1. The school leadership and staff are committed to maintaining a culture supported by shared beliefs.

1.2

The vision and mission of the school is posted in every classroom and in the hallways. It was clearly articulated by staff, parents, and the senior leadership of the university. The stakeholders work together to foster an environment that enhances the lives of young children.

Opportunities for Improvement**Indicator**

1. Develop a written plan for tracking the developmental growth of young children and the academic growth of older students that includes measurable objectives, strategies, and timelines.

1.3

There is not a formal systematic continuous improvement process for monitoring physical, emotional, mental, and academic growth. Developmental growth is viewed on an individual basis, and therefore there is no collective data upon which to evaluate overall program effectiveness.

Standard 2: The school operates under governance and leadership that promote and support learning, growth, and development in young children, family involvement, and school effectiveness.

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

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

Standard 2			
The school operates under governance and leadership that promote and support learning, growth, and development in young children, family involvement, and school effectiveness.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.1	The school's policies, practices, and agreements ensure effective administration of the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development offerings and plans • Staff handbooks • Written policies, procedures, and practices • School handbooks 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
2.2	The governing authority member(s) operates responsibly and functions effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication plan to inform all staff on code of ethics, responsibilities, conflict of interest • Governing authority training plan • Findings of internal and external reviews of compliance with laws, regulations, and policies • Governing authority policies on roles and responsibilities, conflict of interest • Governing code of ethics 	3.0
2.3	The governing authority ensures that the school leadership has the autonomy to meet its goals for young children and developmentally appropriate instructional practices and to manage day-to-day operations effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey results regarding functions of the governing authority • Roles and responsibilities of school leadership • Stakeholder input and feedback 	3.0
2.4	Leadership and staff foster a culture consistent with the school's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of collaboration and shared leadership • Examples of improvements and innovations in the educational programs for young children developed by the school or required by the corporation 	3.0
2.5	Leadership engages defined stakeholder groups effectively in support of the school's purpose and direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of stakeholders in a school improvement plan • Examples of stakeholder group feedback resulting in school action 	3.0
2.6	Leadership and staff supervision and evaluation processes result in improved professional practice and developmentally appropriate learning, growth, and development for young children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of professional development offerings and plans tied specifically to the results from supervision and evaluation • Governing authority policy on supervision and evaluation • Job specific criteria, job descriptions 	3.0

Standard 3: The school's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness, and the developmentally appropriate cognitive, emotional, social, creative, and physical growth and development of young children.

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

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

Standard 3			
The school's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness, and the developmentally appropriate cognitive, emotional, social, creative, and physical growth and development of young children.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.1	The school's curriculum includes challenging content and provides equitable and challenging learning experiences that ensure the developmentally appropriate cognitive, emotional, social, creative, and physical growth and development of all young children and that lead to success at the next level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readiness assessments • Daily schedule • Lesson plans • Learning expectations for different learning domains • Children's work across learning domains and learning expectations 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.2	Curriculum, instruction, and assessment are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data about young children's readiness, learning, and development and examination of professional practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening assessments • Curriculum – referenced assessments • Lesson plans aligned to the curriculum 	3.0
3.3	Teachers engage young children in their learning through developmentally appropriate and effective instructional strategies that address achievement of learning expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda items addressing these strategies • Professional development focused on these strategies • Authentic assessments 	3.0
3.4	School leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure young children's success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative classroom observation protocols and logs • Documentation of collection of lesson plans and reporting (grade) books 	4.0
3.5	Teachers participate in collaborative learning communities to improve instruction and support learning, growth, and development of young children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of cross curricular projects, interdisciplinary instruction, and classroom action research project • Agendas and minutes of collaborative learning committees • Calendar/schedule of learning community meetings • Student portfolios 	3.0
3.6	Teachers implement the program's instructional process in support of children's learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agendas and minutes of faculty/staff meetings • Examples of cross curricular projects, interdisciplinary instruction, and classroom action research project • Developmental screenings and referrals 	3.0
3.7	Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs model best practices and support instructional improvement consistent with the program's values and beliefs about teaching and learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention/turn over rates • Descriptions and schedules of mentoring, coaching, and induction programs with references to school beliefs and values about young children and their learning, growth, and development 	4.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
3.8	The school engages families in meaningful ways in their children's education and keeps them informed of their children's learning progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications to parents • Calendar outlining when and how families are provided information on child's progress 	4.0
3.9	The school has a formal structure whereby each child is well known by each adult in the school who supports that child's educational experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naturalistic observations of children on an on-going basis • Teacher observation checklist 	4.0
3.10	Documenting, measuring and reporting young children's learning, growth, and development that represent the attainment of learning goals and content are consistent across the school's developmental programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment schedules • Reporting documents to parents 	3.0
3.11	All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief explanation of alignment between professional learning and identified needs 	3.0
3.12	The school provides and coordinates instruction to address the unique learning, growth, and development needs of young children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readiness assessment tools • Parent-teacher conferences • Training and professional learning related to research on learning, growth, and development of young children • Data used to identify unique learning, growth, and development needs of students 	3.0

Powerful Practices**Indicator**

1. Instructional practices are consistently monitored to ensure they are appropriate for young learners.

3.4

In addition to daily walk-through observations by school leaders, school administrators review all lesson plans and materials each week. They conduct three formal walk-through observations using a standardized checklist and provide immediate feedback; conduct mid year reviews with each employee; and conduct an annual review that is focused on best practice.

2. The education of the children is a collaborative effort of parents and staff.

3.8

Parents of infants and toddlers receive a daily report and parents of preschool parents receive a weekly report. However, the small class size allows for personal interaction between the parent and teacher each day. Teachers provide suggestions for additional work at home, and parents provide updates. Many parents stated they could not have a better parenting class.

3. Each child is well known by multiple adults at the school.

3.9

The review team noted the ease and familiarity with which teachers and assistants interacted with children. During the parent interviews, they constantly stated that staff members who didn't even serve their child would comment on something that had happened that day or would inquire about their child's well-being.

4. Mentoring, coaching, and induction programs are based upon best practice.

3.7

The school has many seasoned educators who have received excellent professional development over the years. They are responsible for working with all new staff members to ensure the curriculum is delivered with integrity. Administrators constantly visit new staff members to provide feedback on their progress.

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

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

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

Standard 4			
The program has resources and provides services that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all children.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.1	Qualified professional and support staff are sufficient in number to fulfill their roles and responsibilities necessary to support the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies, processes, procedures and other documentation related to the hiring, placement, and retention of professional and support staff • Staff License/certification/qualifications • Staff compensations/benefits • Professional and support staff/child ratios 	3.0
4.2	The school employs qualified Administrators/Directors for each administrative position to support the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff License/certification/qualifications 	3.0
4.3	The school employs qualified teachers for each professional teaching position to support the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff License/certification/qualifications 	3.0
4.4	The school employs qualified assistant teachers for each position to support the school's purpose, direction, and the educational program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff License/certification/qualifications 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.5	The school maintains a class-size and ratio of young children to teachers that support the care and developmentally appropriate learning, growth, and development of young children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Staff to student ratio records 	2.0
4.6	Instructional time, material resources, and fiscal resources are sufficient to support the purpose and direction of the early learning school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of efforts of school leaders to secure necessary material and fiscal resources • Budget for authorized expenses and activities • Interviews • Funding overview-public and private funders 	3.0
4.7	The school maintains facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all young children and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written health and safety policies • Documentation of compliance with local and state inspections requirements • Building inspections record • CPR/1st Aid Certification/ health safety trainings • Documentation of emergency procedures such as fire drills and evacuation routes • System for maintenance requests 	3.0
4.8	The school regularly assesses and maintains all indoor spaces to be accessible to all young children and adults; ventilated, lighted, and temperature-controlled; and the spaces that primarily serve each age-group of young children have direct access to bathroom/washing facilities, sinks, and drinking water.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written health and safety policies • Facility and equipment specifications • Documentation of emergency procedures such as fire drills and evacuation routes • System for maintenance requests 	4.0
4.9	Each classroom/learning space has sufficient usable floor space and size to support the creativity and developmentally appropriate learning, growth, and development of young children; is highly functional for program delivery; and encourages positive staff-to-child relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written health and safety policies • Facilities and equipment maintenance records and schedules • Documentation of emergency procedures such as fire drills and evacuation routes • System for maintenance requests 	4.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.10	Each classroom/learning space has furniture, equipment, and resources that are safe, clean, well maintained, adaptive, accessible, and developmentally appropriate for the age-group of young children they directly serve; are sufficient in number; and are organized in ways to support appropriate and effective implementation of the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Lists of instructional concepts with supporting classroom materials 	4.0
4.11	Indoor and outdoor equipment are safe, available to all young children, are developmentally appropriate for the age-group, have appropriate surfaces to support a variety of types of learning and play, and have impact material under all climbing equipment and swings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written health and safety policies • Facility and equipment specifications • Facilities and equipment maintenance records and schedules • Lists of instructional concepts with supporting classroom materials • Observations 	4.0
4.12	Each classroom/learning space has multiple learning/interest centers that are organized for independent use by young children, that support the learning activities of the instructional program and the creativity of young children, and that are well equipped with materials supportive of the purpose of each learning/interest center.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System for ordering/maintaining sufficient supplies • Observations • Lists of instructional concepts with supporting classroom materials • Curriculum standards, guides, expectations 	4.0
4.13	Each classroom/learning space provides all children with safe and comfortable/cozy areas to relax, rest, or sleep that are continuously supervised by adults at all times.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Lists of instructional concepts with supporting classroom materials • Curriculum standards, guides, expectations 	4.0
4.14	Children and school personnel use a range of interactive media and information resources that support the educational programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology plan • Technology and interactive media inventory 	2.0
4.15	The technology infrastructure supports the school's teaching, learning, and operational needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology plan and budget to improve technology services and infrastructure • Hardware and software inventory • Policies relative to technology use • Security of information policies 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
4.16	Each classroom/learning space has displays that are used effectively as a learning tool, are developmentally appropriate for the age-group, attractively presented, appropriate in content, portray the current learning activities, and showcase children's work and creativity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Displays pictures/photos 	4.0
4.17	The school provides support services to meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of young children that are integral to the educational program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of child assessments • Assessment system for identifying children's needs • Intervention services referral • Lists of support services available to students 	3.0
4.18	Each child receives individual personal care by staff members who consistently promote the child's general well-being, nutrition, health, and safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handbooks, procedures • Observations • Parent/Staff communications procedures and expectations • Health inspection records 	4.0
4.19	Arrival and departure routines focus on the care and well-being of each child and encourage a daily exchange of family and school communications regarding the care, well-being, and educational progress of the child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handbooks, procedures • Student records indicating personal needs • Parent/Staff communications procedures and expectations 	3.0
4.20	The school provides services that support the counseling, assessment, and educational referral needs of all students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lists of services available related to counseling, assessment, referral, educational, and career planning • Assessment plan • Description of referral process 	3.0
4.21	All children, parents, and staff experience an environment of reciprocal respect, trust, and open communication in a fair and just way, respecting the needs and characteristics of each individual, and promoting a sense of community, belonging, ownership, and pride.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handbooks, procedures • Student records indicating personal needs • Parent/Staff communications procedures and expectations • Code of conduct • Observations • Written policies on positive guidance strategies 	4.0
4.22	All indoor and outdoor spaces are free from hazards and dangerous circumstances for young children and adults, and adults actively remove and resolve hazardous conditions as they may occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Safety handbooks, guidelines, procedures, expectations • Health inspection records 	4.0

Powerful Practices	Indicator
<p>1. Furniture and equipment were maintained at the highest level to maintain a sanitary and safe environment.</p> <p>The facility was well-kept and very clean. Staff were aware of and immediately responsive to a child's needs, and those needs were attended to in a clean and organized manner. Well written and comprehensive protocols for health and safety procedures were followed.</p>	4.18
<p>2. Classrooms had sufficient space to allow for the individual comfort of each student.</p> <p>Large and small pillows, rugs, pads, and stuffed animals were provided to create comfortable learning and resting areas. Although individuals could spread out for individual rest, the entire room was visible to staff at all times.</p>	4.13
<p>3. Classrooms were designed and supplied to allow for multiple learning centers.</p> <p>Each classroom had multiple learning spaces for high interest centers. There was a large variety of interesting materials for exploration both as individuals and within small group learning and play.</p>	4.12
<p>4. The outdoor play areas exceed expectations for young children.</p> <p>The outdoor play area is large, airy, and secure. It is divided into age specific sections and contains appropriate play equipment. The playgrounds had child friendly, injury reducing play surfaces and they were covered to reduce sun exposure. Helmets for trike riding were assigned to children.</p>	4.11
<p>5. There is an aura of respect and trust between teachers and staff.</p> <p>Parents trust all of the staff members at the Children's Learning Centers. They firmly believe their children are in the hands of people who love them, will nourish them, and will protect them. Staff shared that they felt appreciated and respected by the parents. There is a strong bond between the home and the school.</p>	4.21
<p>6. Individual student needs are met due to the resources in each classroom.</p> <p>All furniture was clearly appropriate for the age of the students being served. Substantial resources were available to meet the wide range of developmental needs of the children. The furniture was well kept and the spaces were exceptionally clean.</p>	4.10
<p>7. The indoor spaces exceed the expectations for providing accessibility for young children.</p> <p>Each classroom has its own bathroom, sink, and drinking water fountain, and each room controls its own temperature. Sinks and counters are at appropriate child level/age level.</p>	4.8
<p>8. The indoor and outdoor spaces of the facility are maintained with extreme diligence.</p> <p>The Children's Learning Centers is provided as a resource for staff and students at the University of Houston. The university maintenance staff is charged with the oversight of these facilities and they work diligently to ensure that the center is well maintained.</p>	4.22
<p>9. Artifacts of learning experiences were evident throughout the school.</p> <p>There was a profusion of children's original work displayed throughout the school and in classrooms. Photographs and original child artwork were displayed at the child gaze level. Mirrors were also placed at child level.</p>	4.16
<p>10. Classroom space is designed for educating young children.</p> <p>There is more than sufficient floor space to educate young children. Moveable furniture allows for the design of creative learning spaces and well defined learning areas.</p>	4.9

Opportunities for Improvement**Indicator**

1. Explore opportunities for increasing media resources which are age and developmentally appropriate.

4.14

Media resources for delivering instruction are minimal. There are many opportunities for differentiating instruction and extending learning through specifically designed programs targeted for young children.

Standard 5: The school uses data about the developmentally appropriate learning, growth, and development of young children and overall school effectiveness and uses the data to guide continuous improvement.

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

Through ongoing evaluation of early learning institutions, AdvancED has found that a successful institution uses assessments from multiple data sources based on clearly defined performance measures. The assessments are used to measure the readiness, learning, growth, and development of students; evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction; and determine strategies to improve student learning, growth, and development. 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 learning, growth, and development and institution effectiveness.

Standard 5			
The school uses data about the developmentally appropriate learning, growth, and development of young children and overall school effectiveness and uses the data to guide continuous improvement.			
Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.1	Professional and support staff continuously collect, analyze, and apply learning from multiple data sources, including comparison and trend data about the readiness, growth, development, and learning of young children; instruction; program evaluation; and organizational conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of data sources related to growth, development and learning of young children, instruction, program effectiveness, and conditions that support learning Survey results 	3.0
5.2	Professional and support staff are trained in the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies specific to data training Survey results Training materials specific to the evaluation, interpretation, and use of data 	3.0

Indicator		Source of Evidence	Performance Level
5.3	The school uses data to design, implement, and evaluate the results of continuous improvement action plans related to the learning, growth, and development of young children including readiness and success at the next level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of growth, development, and learning • Survey results • Evidence of student readiness for the next level 	3.0
5.4	Leadership monitors and communicates comprehensive information about the growth, development, and learning of young children, conditions that support learning, and the achievement of school improvement goals to stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samples communications to stakeholders regarding learning; conditions that support the growth, development, and learning of young children; and achievement of school improvement goals 	3.0

Opportunities for Improvement

Indicator

1. Provide regular professional development to ensure all staff know how to interpret and use data.

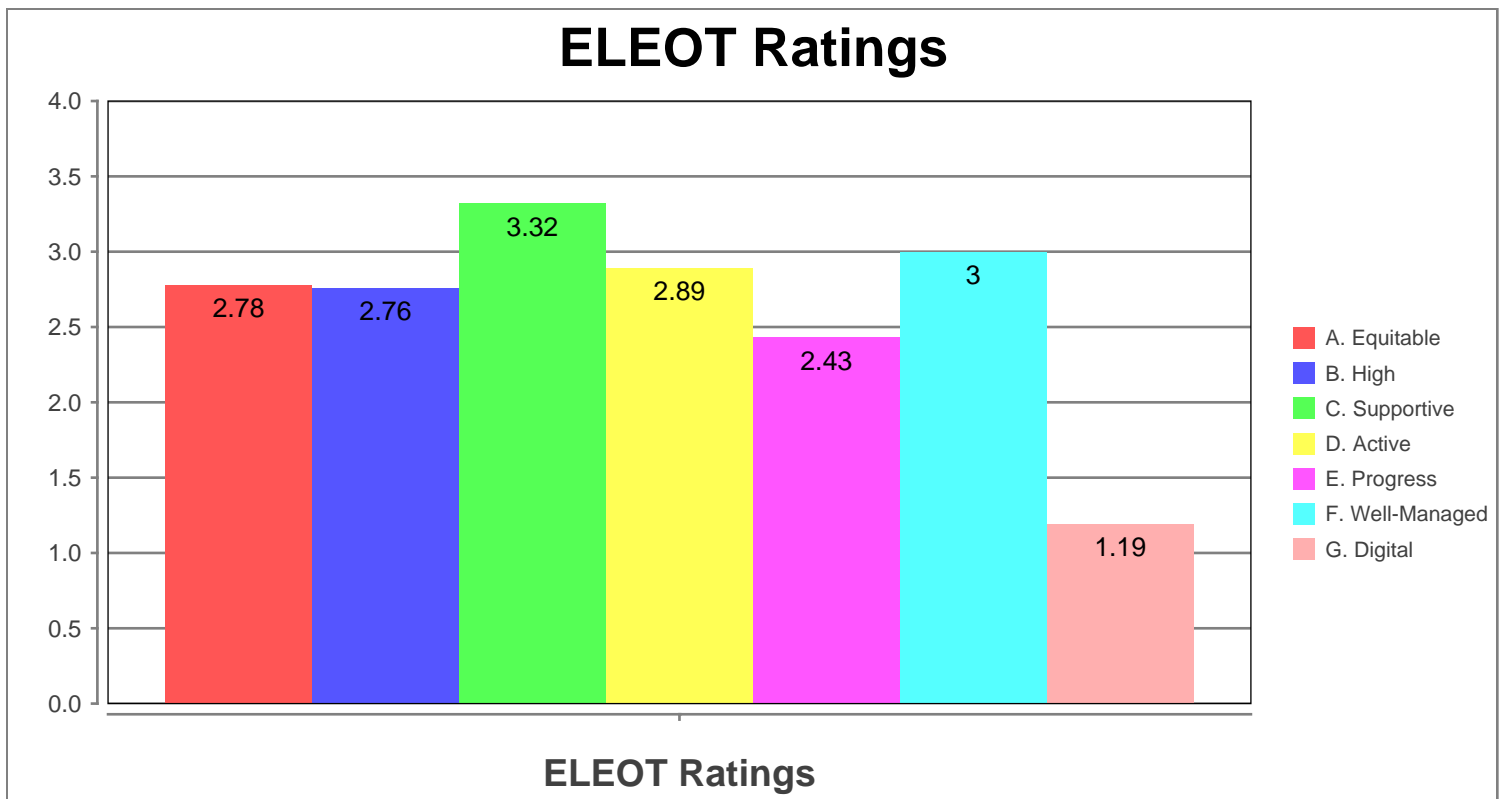
5.3

Although most lead teachers have tenure at the school, the teaching assistants change regularly. All staff needs to be able to read and interpret assessment data to ensure that the developmental and academic needs of each child are met.

Learning Environment

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

Observations of classrooms or other learning venues are conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes per observation. External Review Team members conduct multiple observations during the review process and provide ratings on 33 items based on a four-point scale. The following provides the aggregate average score across multiple observations for each of the seven learning environments included in ELEOT.



Stakeholder Feedback

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

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

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

Part II: Conclusion

Summary of the External Review

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

In off-site and on-site review sessions, the AdvancED External Review Team examined artifacts and evidence provided by the school. A three-member AdvancED External Review Team, composed of a lead evaluator and two additional experienced educators came together on April 29-30, 2014, to begin deliberations and provide scoring for standard / indicator rating and a comprehensive review of the University of Houston Children's Learning Center. In off-site preparation, the team individually examined artifacts and evidence provided by the school ahead of the review. Each member also completed the team training.

During the on-site portion of the review, the team reviewed additional artifacts, collected and analyzed data from interviews, and conducted ELEOT observations. The next step was meeting with school administrators, conducting interviews with representatives from all stakeholder groups, reviewing a number of artifacts and data, and observing classes. After intensive deliberation and discussion sessions identifying potential Powerful Practices, Opportunities for Improvement, and Required Actions, the team completed these components, discussed the classroom observation findings, and finalized the Exit Report, which was presented the second day of the review.

Using the evidence collected, the team engaged in dialogue and deliberations concerning the degree to which the institution met the AdvancED Accreditation Standards and Indicators.

The University of Houston's Children's Learning Centers is located on the university's main campus. It opened in February 1975 in response to the increasing demands of the university community for child care services. The Centers expanded in 1989 and in 2010. Today the Centers serves 221 children age 3 months to 5 years old in two facilities. The plural of the name recognizes the two campuses.

The mission of the Children's Learning Centers is to provide a nationally accredited, exemplary early childhood program that supports the students, staff, and faculty of the University of Houston. It also offers university students the opportunity to work in the facility and to complete internships. The program is part of the Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services. The university uses the services of the Children's Learning Centers to attract outstanding college professors with small children.

The school earned a four rating on Standard 1.2 for the commitment to the school's vision and mission. The vision and mission clearly drive the decision making at the Children's Learning Centers. The value of the Centers is clearly evident in the governance structure and involvement of the university's senior administration. The vice chancellor/vice president for student affairs and enrollment and the assistant vice president came to be interviewed and to assure the review team of the university's support for the Children's Learning Centers. The assistant vice president and the director of the center meet on a regular basis, and the director provides a detailed report twice per year on the progress of the children being served.

The Children's Learning Centers has an active advisory board that is composed of the principal, one teacher, parents, and representatives from various university departments who are appointed by the university. They meet monthly to review administrative policies, develop opportunities for parent education, and provide input for budget development. They also oversee fund raising activities. The parents and advisory board spoke of the accessibility of the school administration and teaching staff and stated they were kept well-informed of daily events at the school.

All human resource and financial aspects of the institution are under the direction of the university. The director interviews all candidates and makes a recommendation to the vice president. Senior administration stated that the director's recommendation is always honored. All employees are part of the University of Houston system and the university's written policies and protocols are followed. Although the formal observation instrument is provided by the university, its components are specifically designed to measure the quality of care and education provided to children. The Children's Learning Centers are licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, the Texas Department of Human and Health Services Commission, and they are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and AdvancED.

The Centers utilize a strong curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate. The Centers earned four ratings of four in Standard three. Multiage education is the purposeful placing of children of different ages and abilities in the same classroom and assists the overall development of the child within a family like community of learners. The Children's Learning Centers utilize multiage classrooms to serves children from one to three years of age in the Toddler Program and children from three to five years of age in the Preschool Program. This practice allows new and/or younger children to join a class as enrollment openings occur.

The director and two assistant directors consistently monitor the curriculum. In addition to daily walk-through observations by school leaders, school administrators review all lesson plans and materials each week. They conduct three formal walk-through observations using a standardized checklist and provide immediate feedback; conduct mid year reviews with each employee; and conduct an annual review that is focused on best practice.

The Centers also provide a Spanish Language Immersion [SLI] program for toddler and preschool children. Children spend all or a large portion of their day learning Spanish in a natural way. They can use, practice, and rehearse the foreign language in an emotionally supportive environment that stimulates all their senses. The program is taught by a group of native Spanish speakers who come from many Spanish speaking countries. Children are exposed to the various dialects and nuances of a region which helps to broaden their understanding of the Spanish language. The program is hugely successful and there is a waiting list of current students.

The school has many seasoned educators who have received excellent professional development over the years. They are responsible for working with all new staff members to ensure the curriculum is delivered with integrity. Administrators constantly visit new staff members to provide feedback on their progress. There are 12 early release days built into the schedule that allow time for four hours of professional development. Topics for professional development are generated by the results of annual assessments, but time is also provided to address teacher concerns or ideas.

The education of the children is a collaborative effort of parents and staff. Parents of infants and toddlers receive a

daily report and parents of preschool parents receive a weekly report. However, the small class size allows for personal interaction between the parent and teacher each day. Teachers provide suggestions for additional work at home, and parents provide updates. Many parents stated they could not have a better parenting class. The school offers classes on specific topics throughout the year and daycare is extended so that parents can attend.

The Centers utilize a formal, criterion-referenced assessment tool that provides a systematic method for observing children. Children functioning in the 0 to 36 month range are assessed using the Early Learning Accomplishment Profile [E-LAP]. Children in the 36-72 month age range are assessed using The Learning Accomplishments Profile-Third Edition [LAP-3]. Each is designed to assist teachers, clinicians, and parents in assessing individual skill development in the six domains; gross motor, fine motor, cognitive, language, self-help, and social/emotional. Prewriting is also included with the LAP-3. The results of the formal assessments are used to generate a comprehensive picture of a child's developmental progress in the learning domains so that individualized, developmentally appropriate activities can be planned. Written results are formally shared with parents at least twice per year.

Teachers also document individual student growth through anecdotal notes, photographs, and collecting samples of the child's work. Portfolios are maintained, are shared with parents, and are passed to the next level to ensure every person is familiar with the child's work. Opportunities for improvement include ongoing professional development in the interpretation and use of data and the development of a method for reviewing the overall progress of the program.

Resource utilization was especially strong for the Children's Learning Centers. The physical environment promotes the highest level of care and education for young children. Classrooms have ample space and contain moveable furniture that allows for the design of creative learning spaces and well defined learning areas. The classroom contained a variety of interesting materials for exploration both as individuals and within small group play.

All furniture was clearly appropriate for the age of the students being served, and substantial resources were available to meet the wide range of developmental needs of the children. The furniture was well kept and the spaces were exceptionally clean. Each classroom boasted its own bathroom, sink, and water fountain, and each had the ability to control the temperature. Large and small pillows, rugs, pads, and stuffed animals were provided to create comfortable learning and resting areas. Although individuals could spread out for individual rest, the entire room was visible to staff at all times.

The outdoor play area was large, airy, and secure. It was divided into age specific sections and contained appropriate play equipment. The playgrounds had child friendly, injury reducing play surfaces and they were covered to reduce sun exposure. Helmets for trike riding were assigned to children.

Parents trust all of the staff members at the Children's Learning Centers. They firmly believe their children are in the hands of people who love them, will nourish them, and will protect them. Staff shared that they felt appreciated and respected by the parents. There is a strong bond between the home and the school.

During the on-site review, members of the External Review Team evaluated the learning environment by observing classrooms and general operations of the institution. Using data from these observations, the team evaluated the quality of instruction and learning that took place classified around seven constructs or environments: equity, high expectations, support, engagement, progress monitoring and feedback, management, and use of technology.

The team interviewed five administrators, 13 teachers, one support staff, five board members, and nine parents. The team conducted nine Effective Learning Environment Observations [ELEOTs]. They found classroom environments to rate very favorably in all environments. Expectations were clearly established and students were engaged in appropriate age and developmental activities.

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

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

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

IEQ Institutional Score: 331

Teaching and Learning Impact: 325
(Standards 3 and 5; Student Performance Criteria)

Leadership Capacity: 327

(Standards 1 and 2; Stakeholder Engagement Criteria)

Resource Utilization: 336

The External Review team recommends that the University of Houston Children's Learning Centers be accredited by the AdvancED Accreditation for a five-year term of accreditation.

Improvement Priority

1. Explore possibilities for decreasing group size.

Related Indicator(s) or Assurance(s):

4.5 The school maintains a class-size and ratio of young children to teachers that support the care and developmentally appropriate learning, growth, and development of young children.

Description:

Some groups are larger than recommended. However, group size is offset by the student to teacher ratio in the classroom.

Part III: Addenda

The External Review Team

Lead Evaluator:

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Team Member:

Mrs. Nancy A Bewley

Ms. Deborah A. Shearer

Next Steps

The institution should:

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

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the External Review, the team submits the final report to AdvancED for review and for action by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission that confers accreditation upon the institution. Upon receiving its accreditation, the institution should share its achievement with internal and external communities.

About AdvancED

In 2006, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), both founded in 1895, and the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) came together to form AdvancED: one strong, unified organization dedicated to education quality. In 2011, the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC) that was founded in 1917 joined NCA CASI and SACS CASI as part of AdvancED. AdvancED is the world's largest education community, representing 30,000 public and private schools and systems across the United States and in 75 countries worldwide and educating 16 million students.

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

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