

*From the desk of the Superintendent...*

Every five years, school districts in Nebraska are involved in a review process for accreditation purposes. There are two types of accreditation. One is through the Nebraska Department of Education and the other is a national accreditation through AdvancED. Our school district has chosen to earn the national accreditation for many years. This national accreditation holds schools to a higher standard.

The accreditation process involves all stakeholders willing to assist in some form or another as well as an evaluation from an External Team. Our parents and students were invited to take part through surveys and meetings. We are very thankful to all those who took their time to participate and provide input for future planning.

Our review occurred at the end of March when the External Team spent two days reviewing documentation, visiting classrooms, and conducting meetings with representatives from various stakeholder groups. We have been anxiously awaiting the official report and it just arrived a few weeks ago. The report and corresponding surveys are available for public viewing and can be found on our district's website. The rubric used to evaluate the standards has also been placed on the website.

When the External Team completed its work, they stated to our staff and Board members that nationally the average ratings schools received were between 2 and 3 on a 4 point scale. We can all take pride in the fact that our averages were between 3 and 4.

Standard 1: The school maintains and communicates a purpose and direction that commit to high expectations for learning as well as shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning. Rating – 3.33

Standard 2: The school operates under governance and leadership that promote and support student performance and school effectiveness. Rating – 3.5

Standard 3: The school's curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning. Rating – 3.08

Standard 4: The school has resources and provides services that support its purpose and direction to ensure success for all students. Rating – 3.57

Standard 5: The school implements a comprehensive assessment system that generates a range of data about student learning and school effectiveness and uses the results to guide continuous improvement. Rating – 3.2

The External Team provided comments on our strengths and provided recommendations for improvement. The identified strengths include providing a purpose and direction through the district's mission, an inclusive school improvement process, long range strategic plan, curriculum revision process, and the addition of a preschool. They also complimented staff on working in professional learning teams, academic goal setting, communication with parents, and providing a safe and welcoming learning environment.

In comparing the recommendations for improvement by the External Team to the Strategic Plan created in January, they align very well. The External Team's recommendations include identifying a common language for evidence-based instructional strategies, more frequent monitoring of classrooms, providing feedback to teachers more often, increasing professional development in targeted areas, increasing the number and rigor of course offerings, and increasing the use of technology by students. Plans have been in the works for addressing these and other areas as we continually strive for improvement. We embrace these recommendations, think of them as opportunities, and look forward to the good work ahead. School improvement is a continuous process.

It takes a strong partnership between school personnel, parents, students, and the community to build and maintain an outstanding school district. We appreciate your efforts to help our school strengthen its practices and commitment to students. The efforts of all have been successful as shown in the External Team's report. We will always have work to do, but it is incredible what can be accomplished when all are working toward the same goals. Thank you for all that you do for our children!

Respectfully,

Cheryll Malcom, Superintendent

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead*