



Milan Area Schools

*Founded on Tradition – Focused on Excellence*

# Scoop from the Supt

by Bryan Girbach

## What is AdvancED?

AdvancED is the largest community of education professionals in the world. The organization provides accreditation services to over 32,000 institutions serving over 20 million students worldwide. AdvancED is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that conducts rigorous, on-site external reviews of Pre-K-12 schools and school systems to ensure that all learners realize their full potential. While their expertise is grounded in more than a hundred years of work in school accreditation, AdvancED is far from a typical accrediting agency. Their goal is not to certify that schools are good enough. Rather, their commitment is to help schools continuously improve.



## AdvancED in Milan

Milan Area Schools recently hosted a 5-year AdvancED External Review. AdvancED Accreditation is not a required process; in fact, Milan made the decision to become district accredited, through this rigorous continuous improvement model, in 2009. While each of our schools had been North Central Association (NCA) Accredited for years, the district chose to strive for District Accreditation and achieved the distinction during our first external review in 2012. In fact, Milan was the first district in Washtenaw County to complete the District Accreditation process.

The visiting team, that conducted the most recent review, for Milan included Dr. Edlow Barker from Richmond, Virginia; Mrs. Becky Wilkerson from Clay County, Florida; Ms. Elizabeth Buckhold from Burton, Michigan; and Ms. Arlene Jury from Okemos, Michigan.

## What Happens During an External Review?

The External Review is a diagnostic process designed to stimulate and guide continuous improvement with a focus on the district's impact of teaching and learning, leadership capacity, and efficient use of resources. During the External Review, the visiting team interacted with many of the district's stakeholders through interviews, presentations, and informal conversations. While in Milan, the team spoke with: 61 students, 17 parents, 5 support staff, 31 teachers, 6 building administrators, 2 central office staff, 7 board members, and the superintendent. In addition, they reviewed the survey data of 546 parents, 207 staff members, and 1,605 students.

Visiting teams are charged with providing constructive comments and a final report that will assist the district in continuously improving our educational processes. Specifically, the team identifies Powerful Practices, Opportunities for Improvement, and Improvement Priorities (detailed below). The team also uses the Index of Educational Quality Scores (IEQ) and Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot) to quantify educational processes in the district. The team’s visit ends with a formal presentation to the Board of Education. Dr. Barker presented the team’s finding to the Board on Wednesday, May 10<sup>th</sup>. Below is a summary of that presentation.

### Positive Comments

Dr. Barker started by recognizing the district with the following complimentary comments:

- high energy level and commitment of our staff
- positive behavior and politeness of our students
- clean and safe school environments we provide
- visible evidence of traditions and drive for excellence
- supportive leadership of the Board of Education, Administrative Team, and Teachers
- tangible culture of family in our buildings

### eleot Scores

The Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (eleot) is used across the AdvancED worldwide network. The eleot focuses on seven aspects of learning environments that promote effective learning and student success. Below are Milan’s scores and the AdvancED Network International Averages (AEN).

Domain	MAS	AEN
Equitable Learning Environment	2.9	2.69
High Expectations Environment	3.1	2.8
Supportive Learning Environment	3.29	3.05
Active Learning Environment	3.23	2.93
Progress Monitoring and Feedback Environment	3.03	2.76
Well-Managed Learning Environment	3.46	3.12
Digital Learning Environment	1.94	1.86

We are very pleased with these scores. However, we will continue to strive for excellence and plan to increase our separation above the averages.

### Opportunities for Improvement

The team provided the district with three opportunities for improvement. While there are no required actions for these items, the team believes that implementing the recommendations will help the district improve. Following each opportunity, I have provided a brief explanation.

1. Identify and implement instructional strategies to address individual learning needs of all children.  
(The team recommended more advanced opportunities prior to high school.)
2. Document and communicate clearly-defined grading policies and procedures with all stakeholders.  
(The team recommended more consistency and communication regarding grading.)
3. Develop and implement a strategic plan to ensure continuous improvement in all areas.  
(The team recommended that we create a formal document detailing our current practices.)

### Improvement Priorities

The team also provided the district with two improvement priorities. These items require a written plan of improvement within two years of the external review. The implementation of the written plan is verified during the next 5-year external review process. Following each priority, I have provided a brief explanation.

1. Secure horizontal and vertical alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.  
(The team recommended that we continue our vertical alignment work outlined in our Board Priority.)
2. Create greater efficiencies and support structures by implementing additional systemic policies and procedures.  
(The team recommended that we review our level of non-instructional support offered to students.)

### Index of Educational Quality (IEQ)

The IEQ is a formative measure for placement on a continuum of performance, pinpointing areas of success as well as areas in need of support and/or focus. The IEQ provides a holistic measure of overall performance. By basing the score on data aggregated from each AdvancED Standard and diagnostic results from student, parent and staff/teacher surveys, the IEQ framework recognizes and supports the entire continuous improvement journey. Each institution's IEQ provides a benchmark to assess and guide future decisions.

By analyzing the components of an IEQ score, an institution can focus their attention and actions on activities and systems that optimize learning for all students.

	<b>MAS</b>	<b>AE Network Average</b>
Overall Score	<b>287.2</b>	278.94
Teaching and Learning Impact	<b>272.62</b>	268.48
Leadership Capacity	<b>316.75</b>	293.71
Resource Utilization	<b>278.12</b>	286.27

We are excited to have an overall score above the international average. While we are slightly below the average for resource utilization, we believe that this is partially attributable to declining state funding of education.

### Powerful Practices

Finally, the visiting team provided the district with two powerful practices. These are areas where the team feels that Milan Area Schools stands out above other districts in the worldwide AdvancED Network.

1. The school system has developed a unique continuous improvement process using highly effective annual internal reviews.
2. The school system and community provide safe and attractive facilities and have high expectations for maintenance and upkeep of the properties.

We are very pleased with the exit report and were excited to be recommended for AdvancED District Accreditation. Thank you to everyone who participated in the External Review Process.