

NWAC / AdvancED Accreditation— the Alliance Experience

--Lorna Fast Buffalo Horse
Alliance Principal

August, 2013

- I started my new job as the principal of Alliance High School, PPS' in-district alternative high school.
- Alliance was due for an external visit the same school year.
- The previous principal had left a few binders with documentation related to the old NWAC standards.

December, 2013

- I met with my lead external evaluator to discuss the accreditation process.
- Soon after, I began the internal review process.

April, 2014

- By the time we had our external review, I had learned many things that concerned me about my new school. These included:
 - No SIP
 - A bell schedule/calendar that did not meet 990
 - A grading system that only documented passing classes with a “P,” no record of attempted credits
 - No period attendance-taking system
 - A prevailing belief among staff that proficiency grading meant doing 100% of course assignments at an averaged 80% success rate (not tied to learning targets)

The External Review

- We were fortunate to have a team of principals from six different alternative high schools, including two with deep CTE experience.
- I was clear that I had nothing to defend, so used my principal's overview time with the team to share the problems I was seeing.

Low Score


- The external review team validated my concerns and pointed out a few others.
- We ended up with a score in the bottom 5% of the state.
- A great opportunity for improvement!

2014-15

- Progress Report to address required actions
- Re-visit to validate changes made
- State advisory council votes on whether to restore full accreditation status

Conclusions

- School Improvement vs. Compliance
- Recommended for principals new to their schools
- An opportunity to improve



Accreditation is an activity, not a status. Schools are accredited because of the way they move, not the way they stand.

--John A. Stoops