

Chippewa Valley schools recommended for accreditation

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By Thomas Franz 



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CLINTON TOWNSHIP — Over the course of four days in late February and early March, more than 415 individuals connected to Chippewa Valley Schools were interviewed by a team from AdvancED, a global accreditation service.

While the district's schools had already received accreditation individually, the purpose of AdvancED's visit was to seek systemwide accreditation as a whole district.

Following those interviews, and visits to 117 classrooms in a three-day span, AdvancED recommended Chippewa Valley for systemwide accreditation, which will become official this June.

"It's critical that we're able to look reflectively through the internal review, but the external review is critical as well because that gives you feedback from someone who is not part of your district," said Director of Elementary Education Donald Brosky.

The district provided the team of seven individuals from AdvancED with a comprehensive look at the district, going as far as having them eat at Dakota High School's Meeting Grounds restaurant.

The review team interviewed Board of Education members, school administrators, instructional and support staff, parents and 201 students.

"We really wanted to keep things in-house, to show that our district is one that we're proud of in every variance," Brosky said. "That was a total team effort. Every single employee in the district contributed to the success of what our accreditation visit was."

The AdvancED team was made up of four out-of-state individuals and three from Michigan. Following their visits and interviews, the team presented the district's Board of Education with areas in which the district already excels, and other areas which could see improvement.

In "powerful practices," AdvancED praised the district for its commitment to a culture of connecting students, families, staff and community.

"That was very powerful that we're able to communicate and there's an understanding in our school culture that we need to connect our students and all of our stakeholders together," Brosky said.

Another positive area of feedback detailed the district's "commitment to a quality education for all students through a laserlike focus on curriculum design, implementation and support."

Brosky credited the district's professional development work as a key reason for that being a positive area for the district's review.

In areas of "improvement priorities," which must be addressed within two years, Brosky said the accreditation team's recommendations were issues consistent with what the district has already begun to address.

The first improvement focus is to implement an evaluation system for teachers and administrators that is research-based, to promote a culture of professional learning and looking at high-quality educational practices.

"That's exactly what we're doing, we're in the middle of that process right now. We're reviewing evaluation tools, and a decision will be made by the end of the school year and administrators and teachers will receive training by next school year," Brosky said.

An expansion of curriculum processes that has primarily been focused in math recently was requested by the review team to be expanded to all subjects at all levels.

The final recommendation from AdvancED was to develop a districtwide sensitivity diversity plan to ensure respect and understanding among students, staff and community.

"One of our goals of the strategic plan is that," Brosky said.

District Superintendent Ron Roberts compared the external review process to "looking in the mirror." He credited the district's ongoing work to form a strategic plan as a key reason as to why none of the AdvancED recommendations came as a surprise to him or the Board of Education members.

"Those things which we suspected were our strengths, and we also suspected were areas to work on, they came back and basically told us things that we had thought about already," Roberts said. "That was a very valuable process."

With a recommendation for systemwide accreditation in place now, Roberts said the district's identity is strong centrally, but also gives freedom to the district's individual schools.

"What this says to me is that we're a school system, and not a system of schools. What we've really worked hard on in the past few years is to define Chippewa Valley, what are those things that we as a district think are important, and that every student or family should be exposed to, and what things are not important," Roberts said.

"I believe strongly that you need a strong, central focus, with a space for schools to put their own stamp on that."



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Staff Writer Thomas Franz covers Macomb Township, Chippewa Valley Schools and the Macomb County Board of Commissioners for the Macomb Township Chronicle. He also covers sports primarily for the Shelby-Utica News. He has worked for C & G Newspapers since 2013 and attended Michigan State University.
