

**Report of the
Quality Assurance Review Team
for
Asheboro City School System**

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Review Dates: 02/13/2011 - 02/16/2011



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), and the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA) are accreditation divisions of AdvancED.

Quality Assurance Review Report

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About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

Background. Founded in 1895, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and Schools (SACS CASI) accredit public and private schools and districts in 30 states, the Navajo Nation, Latin America, and the Department of Defense Schools worldwide.

In 2006, NCA CASI, SACS CASI, and the research and development arm of the accrediting associations, the National Study of School Evaluation, unified to form AdvancED. Dedicated to advancing excellence in education, AdvancED provides accreditation, research, and professional services to 23,000 schools in 65 countries, serving 15 million students.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED. Through AdvancED, NCA CASI and SACS CASI have defined shared, research-based accreditation standards that cross state, regional, and national boundaries. Accompanying these standards is a unified accreditation process designed to help schools, school districts, and educational service agencies continuously improve.

The Accreditation Process. To earn and maintain accreditation from NCA CASI or SACS CASI, school districts and their schools must:

1) Meet the AdvancED Standards and Policies for Quality School Systems. School districts demonstrate adherence to the seven AdvancED standards and policies which describe the quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for school districts to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness.

2) Engage in continuous improvement. School districts and their schools implement a continuous improvement process that articulates the vision and purpose that the school district is pursuing (vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school and district effectiveness, and the school community (profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (results).

3) Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review. School districts and schools engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, school districts host an external quality assurance review team once every five years. The team evaluates the school district's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the school district's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and required actions to help the school district improve. The team provides an oral exit report to the school district and a written report detailing the team's required actions. The school district acts on the team's required actions and submits a progress report two years following the review.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI accreditation engages the entire school district community in a continuous process of self-evaluation and improvement. The overall aim is to help school districts and their schools maximize student success and improve organizational effectiveness

Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

Purpose. The purpose of the Quality Assurance Review is to:

1. Evaluate the school district's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards and policies.
2. Assess the efficacy of the district's improvement process and methods for quality assurance.
3. Identify commendations and required actions to improve the district and its schools.
4. Make an accreditation recommendation for review by the national AdvancED Accreditation Commission.

A key aim of the Quality Assurance Review is to verify that the school district is operating with institutional integrity - that it is fulfilling its vision and mission for its students.

School District Preparation. To prepare for the Quality Assurance Review, the school district and the community complete the AdvancED Standards Assessment Report. The report engages the district in an in-depth self assessment of each of the seven AdvancED standards. The school district identifies and describes the evidence that demonstrates that it is meeting each standard. Through this internal review, the school district examines how its systems and processes contribute to student performance and school district effectiveness.

Summary of Team Activities. The Quality Assurance Review Team is led by an AdvancED certified District Lead Evaluator and comprised of professionals from outside the school district. The team reviews the findings of the school district's internal self-assessment, conducts interviews with representative groups of stakeholders, reviews student performance data and other documentation provided by the school district, and observes practices and daily operations. The team engages in professional deliberations to reach consensus on the school district's adherence to the standards for accreditation. The team provides an oral exit report and prepares a written Quality Assurance Review Team Report designed to help the school district and its schools improve.

The Quality Assurance Review Team Report. Following the visit, the review team completes the Quality Assurance Review report. After review by a nationally-trained reader, the report is submitted to the district. The report contains commendations and required actions for improvement.

Using the Report - Responding to the Required Actions. The school district uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The school district is held accountable for addressing the required actions identified in the report. The AdvancED State Office is available to assist the school district in addressing the required actions. Following the Quality Assurance Review Team visit, the school district must submit a progress report detailing the actions and progress it has made on the team's required actions. The report is reviewed at the state and national level to ensure the school district is addressing the required actions.

Accreditation Recommendation. The Quality Assurance Review team uses the findings from the onsite visit to make an accreditation recommendation that is reviewed at the state level and by the national AdvancED Accreditation Commission. Accreditation is granted by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission and communicated to the school district following action from the commission.

Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the SACS CASI North Carolina State Office (SACS-CASI-NC), a division of AdvancED, visited Asheboro City School System on 02/13/2011 - 02/16/2011.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 33 administrators, 68 teachers, 26 support staff, 57 parents and business partners, 33 students, and 8 Board of Education members for a total of 225 stakeholders. In addition to meeting with district personnel and stakeholders, the team visited 4 schools within the school district. During the school visits, team members interviewed school stakeholders, observed classrooms, and reviewed relevant school artifacts. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the district. Specifically, the team examined the district's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

1. Vision and Purpose
2. Governance and Leadership
3. Teaching and Learning
4. Documenting and Using Results
5. Resource and Support Systems
6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships
7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The AdvancED standards focus on systems with a school district and systematic methods of attaining high student performance and organizational effectiveness. The power of the standards lies in the connections and linkages between and among the standards. The Quality Assurance Review Team used the AdvancED standards to guide its review of the school district, looking not only for adherence to individual standards, but also for how the school district and its schools function as a whole and embody the practices and characteristics of a quality school district.

Through its examination of the school district's adherence to the standards, the Quality Assurance Review Team prepared reports on each standard, highlighting strengths and suggestions for improvement specific to each standard. These reports can be found following this summary.

The Quality Assurance Review Team also examined the effectiveness of the district's methods for quality assurance. The team reviewed the district's practices and methods to monitor and document improvement, provide meaningful feedback and support across the district, ensure that AdvancED standards are met and strengthened, and regularly collect, use, and communicate results. The team's findings in this area can be found following the standard reports.

The team used the standard reports and quality assurance findings to identify common themes, significant accomplishments, and pressing needs facing the district. These became the basis for the overall commendations and required actions that are provided below. The commendations and required actions should serve as the focus for the district as it acts on the team's findings. They represent the areas that the team believes will have the greatest impact in helping the district further its improvement efforts. The standard reports and quality assurance findings can be used to help reinforce and enrich the district's understanding of the commendations and required actions.

Commendations

The Quality Assurance Review Team commends the Asheboro City School System for the following strengths and accomplishments. While additional strengths are noted in the detailed review of each standard that appears later in this report, the commendations listed below are the strengths that the team believes are most deserving of being highlighted.

- **The entire district, including all stakeholders, has embraced the vision and purpose of the district.**

During interviews, stakeholders were able to clearly articulate the mission and vision of the school district. Furthermore, stakeholders expressed support for the vision.

Stakeholder acceptance and buy-in of the Asheboro City Schools' vision statement will result in a system where "every student graduates, and is globally competitive for career, college, and citizenship."

- **The strategic plan outlines the district's vision and purpose: it is then effectively utilized to guide the teaching and learning processes and strategic direction of schools, departments, and services.**

Evidence was presented that the strategic plan is focused on improved student achievement. Additional documentation was provided as evidence of the plan's use in the decision-making process.

The district's use of their strong strategic plan with the primary focus on improved student outcomes will result in academic growth for all students.

- **The district has an impressive commitment to preparing students for the 21st Century through a bold technology plan that includes cutting-edge interactive classroom technology, wireless access, and a high school one-to-one laptop initiative.**

Classroom observations and walkthroughs verify the positive impact of up-to-date technology on teaching and learning. Stakeholders express support and enthusiasm for these new tools.

Cutting edge technology, which is embraced by staff, will continue to have a positive impact on student engagement and achievement.

- **The superintendent and board have created a relationship among all stakeholders which is characterized by a mutual commitment to, and clear understanding of, respective roles and responsibilities that facilitates trust, respect, transparency, and integrity.**

Internal and external stakeholders recognize the exemplary work of the superintendent and board to provide proactive leadership to the district. Strong relationships have resulted in an atmosphere of transparency, trust, and respect.

The positive relationships that are evident in this district result in a nurturing, productive environment that fosters collaboration.

- **In the face of declining state, federal, and local funding, the district has leveraged impressive partnerships with private, public, and civic groups.**

When the Quality Assurance Review Team met and interviewed multiple community partners during the

visit, it was evident that they are providing valuable services and programs to the district.

The teamwork between the staff and partners is positively impacting student achievement by supplementing and continuing to provide services to all students and will continue to do so in the future.

Required Actions

In addition to the commendations, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following required actions for improvement. The team focused its required actions on those areas that, if addressed, will have the greatest impact on improving student performance and overall effectiveness of the school district. The Asheboro City School System will be held accountable for making progress on each of the required actions noted in this section. Following this review, the school district will be asked to submit a progress report on these required actions. The district should refer to the detail provided in the standard reports for guidance and greater depth on the required actions.

- **Establish a district-wide process to monitor all initiatives that support teaching and learning to verify equity and consistency in instructional delivery.**

The Quality Assurance Review team did not see or hear about a process for ensuring consistent implementation of key initiatives across the district. Fidelity of instructional delivery will assure equity of program delivery to all students.

Monitoring of exemplary programs will result in increased student achievement for all subgroups.

- **Develop research-based, culturally-sensitive strategies for identified subgroups to close the achievement gap.**

Throughout the interview process, it was evident that all stakeholders recognize the need to close the achievement gap.

Researched-based, culturally-sensitive strategies for identified subgroups will close the achievement gap, increase the graduation rate, and prepare students for careers and college.

Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools: The team reviewed the district's adherence to each of the AdvancED standards. The findings from this review are provided in the next section of this report.

Next Steps

The school district 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 commendations section to maximize their impact on the school district.
3. Develop action plans to address the required actions made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the required actions.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the school district's efforts to improve student performance and district effectiveness.

5. Two years following the Quality Assurance Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the required actions. The report will be reviewed at the state and national level to ensure that significant progress is being made toward the required actions. Lack of progress can result in a change in accreditation status.
6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

Resources

AdvancED offers a range of resources to support your school district as it acts on the findings in this report. The AdvancED Resource Network, available at www.advanc-ed.org/resourcenetwork, provides an online network of peer-to-peer practices, best practices, and resources and tools designed to help school districts and their schools with continuous improvement.

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the visit, the Quality Assurance Review Team submits an accreditation recommendation to AdvancED for review and action at the national level by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the school district. Upon receiving its accreditation, the school district should celebrate its achievement with the community. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and other related items can be ordered from the website to help you share your accomplishment with your community.

Summary

The accreditation process engages the school district, its schools, and community in an ongoing journey of continuous improvement. The next steps in this journey are to build on the commendations and address the required actions noted in this report. Doing so will enable the school district to advance in its quest for excellence and deepen the fulfillment of its mission for all students.

Standards for Accreditation

The primary requirement for accreditation is that the district demonstrates that it meets the seven standards for accreditation. The findings of the Quality Assurance Review Team regarding the standards for accreditation are summarized on the following pages.

The Quality Assurance Review Team divided into standard teams to review each standard and prepare a standards report summarizing the team's findings. These standard reports, along with the quality assurance findings that follow these reports, provided the basis for the team's identification of over-arching commendations and required actions presented earlier in this report. The reports submitted by each team are provided on the following pages for the district's review and use. Each report reflects its respective team's unique voice, perspective, and deliberations. The reports can be used to help enrich and deepen the district's understanding of the overall commendations and required actions.

Standard 1. Vision & Purpose

Standard: The system establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the system.

Description:

The district updated their strategic plan for 2010 2013. Previously, there was a five-year plan, and those interviewed indicated that the goals were achieved in a shorter time so it was determined that a three-year strategic plan was more suitable to the district. Stakeholder input was sought by the district leadership in a wide variety of ways, including "Coffee and Conversation" sessions throughout the community. District leadership demonstrated stakeholder support by updating the beliefs and core values to include higher expectations of students and more specific relevancy to teaching and learning. The strategic plan was vetted through all groups of stakeholders with statements of vision, mission, beliefs, and core values being the basis of the plan. Stakeholders are proud of their district and are knowledgeable about the vision statement and the district strategic plan. The vision is forward-thinking of what students will need to graduate and be globally competitive for careers, college, and citizenship.

The Quality Assurance Review Team observed mission and vision statements in multiple venues district wide. All stakeholders could describe what the vision meant to them and how it was the focus of the district's work. Goals and objectives of every plan throughout the district reflected the vision and mission.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- The school system is committed to a purpose that is shared system-wide.
- Stakeholders are supportive of the vision and are knowledgeable of its meaning.
- Goals and objectives guide the work of the system.
- A review process is in place to ensure that the vision and mission statements remain current.
- The district has stated expectations of student learning.
- Annual reviews of student performance data is considered during the revision process of the vision and mission statements.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Establish a process for program evaluation of goals and objectives of the district plans that reflect

the district's vision and mission.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional," indicating that the Asheboro City School System has met the accreditation requirements for the "Vision & Purpose" standard.

Standard 2. Governance & Leadership

Standard: The system provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and system effectiveness.

Description:

Asheboro City Schools is governed by a board of education comprised of eleven members, all of whom are elected at-large. Board members are elected for six-year terms. The superintendent and cabinet supervise the total operation of the district to insure effectiveness and efficiency. The district organizational charts show lines of responsibility as well as specific duties for each administrator.

Interviews indicate that the board and staff operate in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. Additionally, the team found that the board members believe that their role is to set policies which will be interpreted and administered by the superintendent and staff. The board has established two standing subcommittees that meet monthly to discuss policy and finance.

The superintendent hosts an orientation session for perspective board members when they announce candidacy for the Board of Education. The board is one of the first in North Carolina to achieve Master Board III status from the North Carolina School Boards Association. According to interviews, the superintendent, cabinet, and board members are accessible and highly visible in the community. Internal and external stakeholders agreed that the board contributes to the overall effectiveness of the school district.

The website clearly describes the roles and responsibilities of the board that protect the leadership authority of the superintendent. The six identified roles and responsibilities of the board are to provide vision and direction for the school system, create policies in accordance with state law to establish standards, accountability and evaluation of essential operations of the district, prepare the budget for presentation to the county commissioners, hire, support and evaluate the superintendent, perform judicial functions and to advocate for the school district, staff, and especially students. Stakeholders confirm that these responsibilities are followed by the board members.

Internal and external stakeholders acknowledge the exemplary work of the superintendent and the financial office to provide proactive, creative solutions to the recent and impending budget cuts to public education.

An attorney is retained by the board. The attorney attends all regular meetings of the board. Administrators can seek legal counsel through the director of support services in the central office.

The district website is used as a tool to enhance transparency of the school district. Board policies, board minutes, student performance data, the annual report and other relevant data are easily available online. Parents interviewed were enthusiastic about the automated calling system for routine and emergency

notifications. The Quality Assurance Review Team did not find evidence of regular survey protocols that provided feedback to stakeholders. Additionally, the team did not see or hear about a systematic plan for the analysis and use of the data obtained from stakeholders.

Stakeholder collaborative networks are in place to support district programs and the strategic plan. The superintendent regularly meets with student, parent, and staff advisory councils. A parent advisory council for English as a Second Language students meets to discuss their needs and ways to better serve that student population.

The district maintains adequate insurance coverage to protect their physical and human resources. Key staff are bonded, workers are covered by workers' compensation, vehicles are insured, and the board is protected through the North Carolina School Boards Association.

Student performance data are systematically analyzed and reviewed. Multiple data points are examined throughout the year among the administrative and leadership staff. The superintendent meets at least two times per year with each principal to review data and the continuous improvement plan. The board and community are regularly updated on student performance and system effectiveness. The strategic plan provides the road map for all decisions regarding resource allocation, professional development, and human resources. The use of the strategic plan assures that decisions are aligned to meet organizational and student performance goals.

Internal and external stakeholders are provided opportunities to be involved in the decision-making process of the district and individual schools through face-to-face meetings, committees, councils, and student government.

Data from the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions survey are analyzed and shared with stakeholders. Students and parents are regularly surveyed to assess their satisfaction with the district. Schools address the survey data in their annual continuous improvement report to the board.

The district has positively embraced the new North Carolina evaluation systems for teachers, principals, and superintendent. The district is excited that the new instruments are focused on a professional growth model.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- The board and the superintendent have a strong working relationship built on a clear understanding of their respective roles.
- School staff and community members made favorable comments about the strong support received from the board, superintendent and central office staff.
- The board is committed to their own high quality professional development and growth.
- Working relationships are built on mutual trust among board, superintendent, central office and building level administrators.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Establish a protocol to systematically survey all stakeholders and include a plan for the analysis and use of the data.
- Implement a systemic stakeholder survey process across the system.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Asheboro City School System has met the accreditation

requirements for the "Governance & Leadership" standard.

Standard 3. Teaching & Learning

Standard: The system provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Description:

The district accesses the North Carolina Accountability and Curriculum Reform Effort (ACRE) to guide curriculum and instruction. They also reference the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) work on essential standards and common core standards which is the state K-12 curriculum in core content areas. A close watch on the NCDPI work to assist districts in transitioning to the new common core standards is guiding district decisions in textbook and materials selection. District staff members meet during summers to review student expectations in the curriculum and pacing guides. Throughout the school year, staff members have met in collaborative team meetings at each of the buildings to examine student data and develop interventions for students who have deficits in their learning. District elementary teachers meet twice a year by grade level to plan curriculum, discuss instruction, and develop common assessments. Middle and high school teachers meet together to share their curriculum and instructional strategies across vertical content teams.

System administrators meet monthly in collaborative groups with principals, assistant principals, and lead teachers to ensure that system-wide curricular and instructional decisions are horizontally and vertically aligned. The superintendent and assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction often lead the monthly meetings where discussion is focused on student learning with delivery methods based on research and reflective of best practice.

Asheboro City Schools supports core values that lead to systematic review of a curriculum that challenges and meets the needs of each student. Demographics of the district have changed in the recent years to increase the need of expanding the capacity of all staff to better understand equitable delivery of instruction to a diverse student population. The Quality Assurance Review Team found evidence that suggests a need to locate and implement culturally-sensitive instructional strategies to the students with diverse educational backgrounds.

A wide variety of instructional initiatives are being made available to district students to provide intentional strategies that increase student learning opportunities to become more college and career-ready. Literacy across the curriculum is another focus. Program implementation is embraced by the staff to assure equitable learning opportunities. The QAR Team found evidence that the district needs to more closely monitor program delivery of instruction and measurements of its effectiveness. Interventions are provided for differentiated services to all students as determined by data analysis of formative assessments and teacher deliberations during collaborative team meetings.

The district recently implemented an initiative that placed a laptop computer in the hands of each high school student. This was the realization of a major district goal of making interactive technology available to students to increase access to 21st Century tools and skills. There is a smartboard in each classroom that has enhanced teacher effectiveness in the delivery of technology-embedded instruction. The additional technology has provided new dimensions of media and instructional materials for student learning.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- The Asheboro City School system provides a curriculum based on high expectations for student learning that offers opportunities for students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
- District/community partnerships and innovative course offerings provide individualized learning opportunities for students.
- There is a systemic emphasis on literacy across the curriculum.
- A dedicated time for intervention services, as determined by staff analysis of student data, is provided at the elementary and middle schools.
- Interactive technology applications offer students and staff access to 21st Century skills and tools.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Acquire research-based, culturally-sensitive strategies to close the achievement gap among identified subgroups that will support the district-wide goals.
- Monitor maintenance of effort and focus for improved student achievement.
- Verify program fidelity of implementation.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Asheboro City School System has met the accreditation requirements for the "Teaching & Learning" standard.

Standard 4. Documenting & Using Results

Standard: The system enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and system effectiveness.

Description:

Asheboro City Schools has established and implemented a comprehensive assessment system that mirrors the district's expectations for student learning. The Asheboro City Schools Statistical Profile 2010 arranges the data in an easily accessible format. It includes the strategic plan, average daily attendance and student membership projections for the coming years, ethnic make-up, ABC's of Public Education and Adequate Yearly Progress – No Child Left Behind (AYB-NCLB) summaries and status, and a variety of high school specific data. Staffing and financial data are also addressed. The statistical profile and yearly report are available on the district webpage.

The district ensures that student assessment data are used to make decisions for continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Evidence indicates that the school board utilizes end of year data to formulate the Continuous Improvement Plan. In individual schools, data days are used in professional learning communities to plan for the next steps of the teaching process by collectively studying the data and planning accordingly. Elementary schools use Assessment Walls to organize and share data with students every six weeks enabling ownership by the student. The data are also used to determine interventions. Students in the middle and high schools did not demonstrate acquisition or tracking of their personal data. Most of them knew how they were doing in their classes, but the maintenance of various data points was not evident to the Quality Assurance Review Team.

Evidence affirmed that data are disaggregated and shared at all levels to enable data driven decisions for increased student growth. Data are reviewed in strategic planning using the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Trend (SWOT) analysis. Central office monitors the use of data by conferencing with principals at least twice a year to discuss concerns and progress. However, system-wide protocols to ensure that data inform and drive the decision-making process for improved instruction were not observed by the QAR Team.

Data are shared with stakeholders through several methods including the system website, the Statistical Profile, test scores sent to parents, and teacher-student conferences about data, and plans to improve as indicated by the information on the Assessment Wall. Reports are shared at school board meetings with the board, media, and public.

School level administrators confirmed that comparisons to schools with similar demographics were studied and visited to glean ideas for improvement. They expressed the desire to be able to compare trend data from comparable school systems to evaluate the district's student performance and system effectiveness.

Trend data from state ABC testing indicates gradual growth. AYP results vary from year to year and are affected by changing demographics. Benchmark assessments are utilized at the individual level to track growth and adapt instruction.

NCWise data management system maintains individual testing information that is available at the school level, the central office, and the state level.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- The system enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and system effectiveness.
- Staff use data to make decisions, including analysis of results, to assist them in improving services to stakeholders, and to alter services within the district.
- The variety of district assessments presents a comprehensive picture of student achievement and organizational effectiveness.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Develop systemic and systematic protocols to ensure that data inform and drive the decision-making process regarding strategies for continuous improvement.
- Engage students in tracking their own data on performance using a variety of data points.
- Use comparison and trend data from comparable school systems to evaluate student performance and system effectiveness.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Asheboro City School System has met the accreditation requirements for the "Documenting & Using Results" standard.

Standard 5. Resource & Support Systems

Standard: The system has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Description:

The District is made up of five elementary schools, two middle schools, one high school, and one preschool - family literacy center serving approximately 4636 students in grades K-12.

The school system consists of 667 professional and support staff members; 384 of those are highly qualified and dedicated teachers. A Leadership Academy is in place to prepare prospective principals, assistant principals, and lead teachers. This unique opportunity allows the school system to retain and mentor qualified professional staff to fulfill assigned roles and responsibilities within the school system. Interviews indicate that there is a partnership among the school system, Baldwin College, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to recruit and employ highly qualified teachers. The school system provides opportunities for the Exceptional Children (EC) teachers to become highly qualified in dual areas, EC and regular education. Outstanding first year teachers are recognized through the “Apple of Excellence” program. Stakeholders share the existence of a new comprehensive induction, support and mentoring program for teachers. In an effort to retain professional and support staff, the district encourages employees to seek advance degrees and provides support through a partial tuition reimbursement plan.

District administrators utilize their strategic plan as the guide to assign professional and support staff. Staff are assigned based on qualifications to insure compliance with all state and federal requirements.

Staff confirm that there is a true commitment for everyone to participate in professional development, with one goal in mind – build capacity of all. Schools have the autonomy to conduct building level professional development based on the individual needs as outlined in the continuous improvement plan. All professional development must focus on improved student outcomes.

The school system employs 384 teachers with 100% meeting the “highly qualified” federal standard. Evidence indicates that 44% of teachers have advanced degrees, and 15% of teachers have National Board certification. The superintendent has an earned doctorate and meets all requirements and qualifications of the state of North Carolina. The administrative and supervisory personnel have advanced degrees and meet all state requirements to hold assigned positions.

The district takes a proactive stance for fiscal matters. Evidence indicates that resources are maximized and used well within the allocations provided, and are aligned with the district’s strategic plan. Evidence and interviews indicate that Title I funds are used to purchase classroom libraries and that the schools are well equipped with literacy materials. While the district does not employ a grant writer, grants are sought and obtained by administrators in the central office. They were recently awarded a \$375,000 Golden Leaf grant for science enhancement. Financial records are audited each year, and the results from the audit reflect best practices and proper budgetary procedures.

Written documents verify the existence of district and school level crisis teams to include written security and crisis management plans. Interviews indicate that the district is seeking the first Department of Labor STAR safety status for a school district in North Carolina. Five school nurses are employed to serve the nine schools in the district. School Resource Officers are provided for the middle and high schools. Students report that they feel safe at school. Parents feel that schools are safe, supportive environments for

their students.

Evidence indicates that the district has effective safety and crisis plans that operate within the confines of the physical layout of each school. Appropriate training for the employment of the crisis management plan is conducted in each school.

A comprehensive Long Range Facility Plan outlines the extensive physical plant needs of the district. Observations and walkthroughs indicate that sites, facilities, and equipment are very well maintained, even though staff reported concerns for the aging facilities. The need for the county commissioners to consider updating or replacing existing buildings was reported to the QAR Team.

All classrooms within the District are equipped with interactive and up-to-date technology – Smart Boards, projectors, document cameras, and wireless connectivity. The district recently launched a bold initiative that places a laptop in the hands of each student in grades nine through twelve. Laptops are given to the student to use at school and home. Observations and walkthroughs at the high school found students utilizing the laptops to complete online and advanced placement courses, create and publish school projects, and conduct educational research.

Interviews indicate that each school has health and wellness initiatives that are aligned with the District's Strategic Plan. Over the past five years nurses have been hired to serve the health needs of the students in all nine school. Students interviewed indicate that they feel safe at school. A social worker is hired for each level, elementary, middle, and high. An attendance worker serves the district to assist with the goal to improve student attendance. The high school has four counselors. Each elementary and middle school has one counselor.

Interviews indicate that each school within the district has extremely active Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO), Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), and Parent and Community Advisory Councils. These organizations meet on a regular basis and use school-provided interpreters for the families who do not speak English as their primary language. Faith-based, community-based, youth associations, civic organizations, parent organizations, governmental agencies, higher education, and the North Carolina Zoo partnerships provide valuable resources to the district. The district provides student and parent support services through a variety of programs including:

- Family Alliance Network (FAN) parent academy;
- Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) – support for students and families to help develop the skills necessary to go to college; and
- Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) – targets low income students; implemented in grades 7-10 (currently in year 4); support for rigorous college-prep courses; tutoring.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- The finance office and the superintendent are forward thinking and always planning ahead to minimize budgetary reduction impact to the district.
- The board supports staff through their tuition reimbursement incentive program for staff seeking advanced degrees.
- The district has actively pursued and established impressive partnerships with a range of private, public and civic groups to help them reach their vision to meet the needs of all students.
- GEAR-UP and AVID are exemplary programs to support high expectations and achievement of all students.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Address the facility needs of the district. The board and administration should continue to pursue funding sources to replace and upgrade existing buildings.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Asheboro City School System has met the accreditation requirements for the "Resource & Support Systems" standard.

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications & Relationships

Standard: The system fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Description:

The Asheboro City Schools District fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning. The review team heard from several constituents about the "Zoo School", a very popular program with the Asheboro High School students. Students are able to take classes at the local zoo and benefit from world-wide connections available through the zoo. A similar program where stakeholders in the community support student learning is the partnership between the St. Joseph Church and the Donna Loflin Elementary School where volunteers tutor elementary students on goals in their Pupil Education Plans. Another program is The Boys and Girls club that offers the "Power Hour" program. Additional student support programs by community partners were reported. Programs such as these allow the district to solicit the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance the work of the system.

The district uses system-wide strategies to listen to, and communicate with, stakeholders. Parents are invited to come to several available "bag lunch" and "coffee talk" meetings to provide input for preparing the district three-year strategic plan. The "Report to the Community" is a document outlining all the educational goals listed in the strategic plan as well as testing information and many of the stakeholder organizations within the district. Members of the community also recognize the quality of information and articles provided by the education reporter for the local newspaper who provides positive accounts of events within the district.

The district communicates the expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to stakeholders. This is done by a variety of avenues including letters home to parents, progress and report cards, and the Celebration of Achievements. Communication with stakeholders at all levels is thorough and numerous as evidenced by automated phone calls on Sunday evening from the principal and central office calls to share system-wide information. District documents take into account the diversity of the population by including translated documents in Spanish. Similar information is shared in additional ways: Connection Newsletter (also available on-line and in Spanish), The Family Alliance Network, the Student Advisory Council, the President's Round Table, and Monday Musings. Nevertheless, communication efforts to all stakeholders is a continuing challenge.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- Parents receive communication in a variety of forms including written notes, newsletters, email, automated calling, local media, personal calls and conferences.
- The district attempts to make special accommodations for the diversity in the community by including translation for Hispanic families. Translators were used during the team's visit to one of the elementary schools so that those parents could contribute freely to the conversation.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- In addition to Spanish, offer translation options to speakers of other languages.
- Engage various methods of stakeholder input and communication exchange with parents, community, and businesses.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Asheboro City School System has met the accreditation requirements for the "Stakeholder Communications & Relationships" standard.

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Standard: The system establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.

Description:

The Asheboro City Schools District engages in a continuous process of improvement that articulates the vision and purpose the system is pursuing. The system maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, system effectiveness, and the community. It employs goals and interventions to improve student performance for majority student groups, and documents and uses the results to inform future improvement efforts. The district engages stakeholders in the processes of continuous improvement. District representatives shared future goals of making sure that their monitoring systems do inform decision-makers that all components are in place to sustain improvement efforts and assure quality.

This process begins with the development of the district Strategic Plan. Parents are included in the strategic planning process by attending "Bag Lunch" and "Coffee Talk" meetings. After input from the community and evaluating data from areas of achievement, all information is assembled and used to direct the strategic plan. Once approved by the board of education, the strategic plan then drives the work of each of the individual schools as they develop their goal-oriented Continuous Improvement Plan with input from the school's leadership team and staff. These plans are designed to support the district plan.

Benchmark and other data within the district allow the schools to monitor the progress on their goals. The effectiveness of these goals at the school level will impact the district goals. In addition, the progress on the goals is posted on the district website and can be found with much of the data and information in the Statistical Profile.

At the school level, parents are also involved in every school's improvement team or Continuous Improvement Team as they provide input into the school improvement plan. These plans are a way to ensure that each school's plan for continuous improvement includes a focus on increasing learning for all students and closing gaps between current and expected student performance levels. While each school has its own vision statement on these plans, they are aligned to the district vision and the goals in the strategic plan.

In order to support the work of the school improvement plans, and ultimately the district goals, the district provides research-based professional development for system and school personnel to help them achieve the improvement goals necessary to support the plans. Professional Development (PD) is addressed in the Employee Handbook. PD is provided through such offerings as PD 360, online professional development, the NC Formative Assessment Learning Community's Online Network (NC FALCON), add-on licensure

courses, and webinars are available, to name a few.

The district monitors and communicates the results of improvement efforts to stakeholders by posting accomplishments on the school website under the Statistical Profile. By doing so, the district evaluates and documents the effectiveness and impact of its continuous process of improvement.

The district allocates and protects time for planning and engaging in continuous improvement efforts system-wide by providing time for the development of strategic plans and continuous improvement plans. Time is also protected at the school level for staff to engage in weekly discussions to address formative assessments and data in professional learning communities. The district provides direction and assistance to its schools and operational units to support their continuous improvement efforts in the form of staff such as instruction facilitators/lead teachers.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- Asheboro City Schools has made a concerted effort to develop a strategic plan that focuses on improvement in student achievement.
- The district is dedicated to providing ongoing embedded professional development (PD) focused on research-based practices and aligned to the strategic plan.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Include SMART goals that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely in your school level Continuous Improvement plans.
- Conduct a quarterly review of the plan to address supporting data, determine next steps, and modify the plan for each goal.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Asheboro City School System has met the accreditation requirements for the "Commitment to Continuous Improvement" standard.

Quality Assurance Findings

The Quality Assurance Review Team examined the effectiveness of the district's methods for quality assurance. The team reviewed the district's practices and methods to monitor and document improvement, provide meaningful feedback and support across the district, ensure that AdvancED standards are met and strengthened, and regularly collect, use, and communicate results. The team provides the following findings in this area.

Description

Asheboro City Schools models a systemic atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. Evidence gathered throughout the district buildings, staff, stakeholders, and students demonstrated an understanding and appreciation of district accreditation. There is strong, visionary leadership that has developed a strategic plan that guides all decisions throughout the system. The strategic plan outlines the district's vision and purpose: it is then effectively utilized to guide the teaching and learning processes and strategic direction of schools, departments, and services. There is strong, visionary leadership as evidenced by a clear, well-articulated vision and a willingness to examine the district's current reality. Operational and instructional decisions are based on data. Professional development opportunities are made available for improvements in the teaching and learning process. The supportive nature of the administrators throughout the district advances the district's vision and initiatives as they continue to work collaboratively to develop the necessary processes, alignment, and measures needed to meet the AdvancED standards. The district has programs and processes in place to increase staff and student capacities to meet the expectations for high performance.

Protocols and managerial processes are in place to assist the system in its efforts to monitor, document, and communicate improvement goals. Informal and external audits have been used to ascertain strengths and challenges. These protocols and practices need to address the need of all students and all student groups. The district has adopted a continuous improvement planning process that provides each individual school a consistent framework by which to plan and document their individual team efforts. The state provides the guidance and guarantee of an aligned curriculum and assessment system. Parent support groups, open-door-policies at the schools, frequent reports from the Superintendent, the district website, and weekly phone communications are utilized by the district to gather and communicate district priorities, progress of improvement efforts, important announcements of events, and goals for student achievement to all stakeholder groups.

Evaluation processes used for all personnel are aligned to the district's goals and the state's requirements. The district has positively embraced the new state evaluation system for teachers, principals, and superintendent. The district reported that the new instruments are focused on a professional growth model.

A wide variety of instructional initiatives are being made available to district students to provide intentional strategies that increase student learning opportunities to become more college and career-ready. Literacy across the curriculum is a focus. The district ensures that student assessment data is used to make decisions for continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Evidence indicates that the School Board utilizes end of year data to formulate the Continuous Improvement Plan. Professional Learning Communities plan for next steps of the teaching process by collectively studying the data and planning accordingly.

Fidelity of program implementation is embraced by the staff to assure equitable learning opportunities are provided all students. Interventions are selected and aligned to the needs of students according to data analysis of

formative assessments. These interventions are delivered to students after staff deliberations during collaborative team meetings.

Strengths

- District stakeholders have embraced the vision and purpose of the district which provides a strong foundation for all decisions and a focus on student achievement and literacy.
- The strategic plan outlines the district's vision and purpose: it is then effectively utilized to guide the teaching and learning processes and strategic direction of schools, departments, and services.
- The superintendent and board have created a relationship among all stakeholders which is characterized by a mutual commitment to, and clear understanding of, respective roles and responsibilities that facilitates trust, respect, transparency, and integrity.

Opportunities

- Identify the expected performance for various subgroups.
- Support and monitor all student performance to ensure that components of the system are aligned with the strategic direction.
- Foster a culture of ongoing improvement, and implement support systems to sustain improvement efforts and quality assurance.
- Develop and implement a process for monitoring quality programs and processes.
- Maintain an information system that brings together people, processes, and systems to use and share in the communication of information and feedback. Documentation of student and staff performance will help stakeholders and district leadership understand the current status of student learning.

Schools Visited

The Quality Assurance Review team visited the following schools during the visit to the Asheboro City School System on 02/13/2011 - 02/16/2011.

Lindley Park Elementary School	312 Cliff Road	Asheboro	North Carolina	27203
Asheboro High School	1221 South Park Street	Asheboro	North Carolina	27203
Donna Lee Loflin Elementary School	405 S. Park Street	Asheboro	North Carolina	27203
North Asheboro Middle School	1861 N. Asheboro School Road	Asheboro	North Carolina	27203

Conclusion

The commendations and required actions in this report are designed to focus the school district on those areas that will have the greatest impact on student performance and system effectiveness. While powerful in potential, the commendations and required actions only have meaning when acted upon by the school district and its schools. The strength of this report lies in the school district's commitment to using the findings to continuously improve. The key is action. The school district is encouraged to use the report as a call to action, a tool to sustain momentum in the ongoing process of continuous improvement.

The team identified required actions for improvement that the school district will need to address. Following this review, the school district will be required to submit a progress report summarizing its progress toward addressing the team's required actions.

The Quality Assurance Review Team expresses appreciation to the district leadership, members of the professional staff, students, parents and other community representatives for hosting the review team. The team wishes the district and its students much success in the quest for excellence through SACS-CASI-NC accreditation with AdvancED.

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Dr. Joy Mockelmann, CHAIR (Milestone Enterprises)
- Dr. Sonna Lyda, VICE_CHAIR
- Mr. William Long, MEMBER (Iredell Statesville Schools)
- Mrs. Linda Johnson, MEMBER (Uwharrie Middle School)
- Mrs. Kim Griffin, MEMBER (Clinton Public Schools)

AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems

The AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems are comprehensive statements of quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for school districts to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness. As school districts reach higher levels of implementation of the standards, they will have a greater capacity to support ever-increasing student performance and organizational effectiveness. Each of the seven standards listed below has corresponding indicators and impact statements which can be accessed at www.advanc-ed.org.

Vision and Purpose

The system establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the system.

Governance and Leadership

The system provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and system effectiveness.

Teaching and Learning

The system provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Documenting and Using Results

The system enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and system effectiveness.

Resource and Support Systems

The system has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

The system fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The system establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.