Report of the Quality Assurance Review Team for Robert W. Groves High School
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North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) are accreditation divisions of AdvancED.
Quality Assurance Review Report

Contents

About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI ................................................................. 3
Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review .......................................................... 4
Summary of Findings ........................................................................................................... 5
  Commendations .............................................................................................................. 5
  Required Actions ........................................................................................................... 7
  Next Steps ...................................................................................................................... 8
Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools .................................................. 10
  Standard 1: Vision and Purpose .................................................................................... 10
  Standard 2: Governance and Leadership .................................................................... 11
  Standard 3: Teaching and Learning ............................................................................. 13
  Standard 4: Documenting and Using Results ............................................................... 15
  Standard 5: Resource and Support Systems ................................................................. 16
  Standard 6: Stakeholder Communications and Relationships ..................................... 18
  Standard 7: Commitment to Continuous Improvement ............................................... 19
Conclusion ...................................................................................................................... 21
Appendix ......................................................................................................................... 22
  Quality Assurance Review Team Members ................................................................. 22
  AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools .................................................................. 22
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 School Improvement (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 April 2006, the 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 National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) came together to form one strong unified organization dedicated to education quality. That unified organization, known as AdvancED, creates the world's largest education community, representing 27,000 public and private schools and districts across the United States and in 65 countries worldwide and educating 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 continuously improve.

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

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

2) Engage in continuous improvement. Schools implement a continuous improvement process that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing (vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school 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. Schools engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, schools host an external Quality Assurance Review Team once every five years. The team evaluates the school's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and required actions to help the school improve. The team provides an oral exit report to the school and a written report detailing the team's required actions. The school acts on the team's required actions and submits a progress report following the review.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI accreditation engages the entire school community in a continuous process of self-evaluation and improvement. The overall aim is to help schools be the best they can be on behalf of the students they serve.
Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

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

1. Evaluate the school's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards and policies.
2. Assess the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance.
3. Identify commendations and required actions to improve the school.
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 is operating with institutional integrity - that it is fulfilling its vision and mission for its students.

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

Summary of Team Activities. The Quality Assurance Review Team is led by an AdvancED certified team chair and comprised of professionals from outside the school. The team reviews the findings of the school's internal self-assessment, conducts interviews with representative groups of stakeholders, reviews student performance data and other documentation provided by the school, and observes practices and daily operations. The team engages in professional deliberations to reach consensus on the school'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 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 school. The report contains commendations and required actions for improvement.

Using the Report - Responding to the Required Actions. The school uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The school is held accountable for addressing the required actions identified in the report. The NCA CASI/SACS CASI State Office is available to assist schools in addressing the required actions. At prescribed intervals, the school must submit a progress report detailing the actions and progress the school has made on the team's required actions. The report is reviewed at the state and national level to ensure the school 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 by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission. Accreditation is granted by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission and communicated to the school following action from the commission.
Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the SACS CASI Georgia State Office (SACS-CASI-GA), a division of AdvancED, visited the Robert W. Groves High School in Garden City, Georgia, United States on 03/06/2012 - 03/07/2012.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 4 members of the administrative team, 20 students, 18 parents, and 23 teachers. In addition, Leadership Team members and Support Staff were interviewed. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the school. Specifically, the team examined the school'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 within a school 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, looking not only for adherence to individual standards, but also for how the school functions as a whole and embodies the practices and characteristics of a quality school.

Through its examination of the school's adherence to the standards, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following commendations and required actions.

Commendations

The Quality Assurance Review Team commends the school 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.

Commendation 1

Commendation Statement:
Groves casts its vision in a manner that is positive and infectious - Groves is Great!

Evidence:
Parents, students, and staff members all affirmed the slogan that Groves is Great. All stakeholders were able to describe various goals that the school was trying to achieve and the vision to make students successful after high school. An excitement about being part of the restructuring process was evident throughout the school.
Rationale:
True reform will take place only when the whole school family is working together.

**Commendation 2**

Commendation Statement:
The principal provides strong, open, transparent leadership.

Evidence:
All stakeholders volunteered comments about the open-door policy of the new administrator. Teachers said they have a voice in decision-making processes. Students reported that the principal knows them by name and that he offers advice to them each morning to help them become successful. All stakeholders described improvements in the school during the past year, most attributed to the leadership of the principal.

Rationale:
Effective leadership is a necessary component for turning a school around.

**Commendation 3**

Commendation Statement:
Groves has developed and implemented extensive support structures for student achievement.

Evidence:
Students and teachers described many support structures for students who need additional academic assistance, including tutorials, homework help, Recovery Friday, and night or Saturday school. Teachers committed to doing whatever was necessary to help students become successful.

Rationale:
Support structures are essential for student achievement, but especially for students who may not have an understanding of the importance of education or who are economically disadvantaged.

**Commendation 4**

Commendation Statement:
A sense of family exists among all stakeholder groups, and the staff is strongly committed to the students and the school.

Evidence:
The restructuring of Groves caused the staff, parents, and students to pull together much like a family to make their school a good place for learning to occur. All groups indicated that they intend to do their best to make Groves the best it could be. Teachers said they were dedicated to student success. Most stakeholders were pleasingly defensive about the school - claiming that Groves is Great in the midst of a state turn-around effort. An alumni who graduated over 50 years ago expressed his belief that the school is good and must remain part of the Garden City community. Most stakeholders admitted there was much work to be done to turn the school around.

Rationale:
A strong commitment from all stakeholder groups will be necessary in order to make the changes needed for Groves to become a positive place where students can learn.

**Commendation 5**

**Commendation Statement:**
Groves’ shared governance model affords consistent opportunities for stakeholders to participate in transforming the school.

**Evidence:**
The administrative staff and teachers described a systematic process for giving stakeholders opportunities to share in decision-making. All stakeholders quickly described what they would do if they had a suggestion for improvement or a concern. All convinced the team that their voices would be heard.

**Rationale:**
Sound decisions are more likely to be made when many ideas are accepted and discussed.

**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 school effectiveness. The school will be held accountable for addressing each of the required actions noted in this section. Following this review, the school will be asked to submit a progress report on these required actions.

**Required Action 1**

**Required Action:**
Expand the use of data to inform instruction.

**Evidence:**
The recently established Data Room provides immediate access to achievement data for all students. Use of data was evident in some classrooms. The administration and GDOE school improvement specialist described how the color coded cards would be moved from one category to the next reflecting student achievement. However, the need for further training and expansion of the use of data into the classroom was understood by the administration and teachers.

**Rationale:**
Everyone must understand how to use standards-specific data to inform instruction in order for individual students to learn.

**Required Action 2**

**Required Action:**
Sustain stability and continuity of leadership and instructional staff.
Evidence:
Groves experienced a 51% change in staff prior to this school year as part of the state's Turn-Around Model. Many of teachers who were new to Groves this year are also new teachers. The principal described how everyone is working together to assist new and less effective teachers. Parents expressed concern that another year of high staff turnover would have a negative effect on student academic success. They specifically cited the need to keep the new principal who is credited with much of the success of change efforts to this point.

Rationale:
Assessing whether changes made in governance and instruction of a school are successful requires time and continuity of programs and leadership.

**Required Action 3**

**Required Action:**
Differentiate instruction to actively engage students in the learning process.

Evidence:
Effective instruction was noted in many classrooms at Groves. However, classrooms with students who were not engaged in the learning process were also observed. A variety of instructional strategies were observed, but few teachers demonstrated true differentiation of instruction to accommodate individual needs and learning styles of students.

Rationale:
Students have different learning styles and specific academic deficiencies that must be addressed as part of effective instruction.

**Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools:** The team reviewed the school'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 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.
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's efforts to improve student performance and school effectiveness.
5. 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.
Celebrating Accreditation
Following the visit, the Quality Assurance Review Team submits an accreditation recommendation to AdvancED for state review and for action at the national level by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the school. Upon receiving its accreditation, the school should celebrate its achievement with the school community. The SACS-CASI-GA accreditation seals are available at www.advanc-ed.org/communicationskit for accredited schools and districts to post on their website and to use in school communications. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and lapel pins are also available and can be ordered from the website to help you share your accomplishment with your community.

Summary
The accreditation process engages the school in an ongoing journey of continuous improvement. The next steps in this journey are to build on the strengths and address the required actions noted in this report. Doing so will enable the school to advance in its quest for excellence and deepen the fulfillment of its mission for all students.
Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

The primary requirement for accreditation is that the Robert W. Groves High School 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.

Standard 1: Vision and Purpose

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

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

The mission of Groves High School is, "To ignite a passion for teaching and learning at all levels," and the vision is, "From school to the world: All students prepared for productive futures." The mission and vision statements were written in 2006 by a district level committee comprised of various stakeholder groups and were revisited in 2010. It is the district's expectation that all schools adopt these mission and vision statements. The district assumes responsibility for regularly reviewing and revising the mission and vision for all schools.

The mission and vision statements are clearly embraced by Groves High School. However, Groves has gone one step further and adopted the motto, "Groves is GREAT!" While most stakeholder groups credited the motto to the new principal, he says that the students came up with the motto. This motto resounds throughout the building and among stakeholder groups. A process is in place to reach out to stakeholders both inside the school and out of the school to make the mission and vision known. This includes the use of the school website, annual reports to the community, newsletters, and student handbooks. The school staff incorporates this mission and vision into curriculum guides that are used in classrooms, newsletters to parents and community, and TEAM 95, a weekly in-house newscast that proclaims that "Groves is Great!" Most stakeholders could share the essence of the vision and mission, but all knew that "Groves is Great!" Parents and teachers alike said that the school intends to prepare students for life after graduation. One teacher said, "We don't come here every day to have these students fail."

The school has been restructured by the Georgia Department of Education and receives funding from a School Improvement Grant, Race to the Top Grant, 21st Century, Perkins, Title IIA, and Title IV, among others. Funding from these sources is focused on the mission and vision of the school. Curricular, instructional, staffing, and resource allocation decisions are made based on consistency with the school's vision and mission. Goals established for each funding source are based on the belief that Groves must prepare its students to be successful after graduation. The school provides a broad-based course of study and employs a variety of instructional strategies in order to assist students in becoming successful.

The school maintains student profiles and clearly understands the changing demographics of its community. Groves uses stakeholder surveys to determine which parts of the vision are operational and those that are emerging. Shared decision-making regarding instructional strategies, learning activities, and professional development topics focuses on consistency with the vision and mission.
Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- All stakeholders buy-in to the vision and mission and brag that "Groves is Great."
- The motto is evident in the culture of the school.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

- Continue to solicit stakeholder input regarding school effectiveness and fulfillment of the vision and mission.

Finding: Robert W. Groves High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 2: Governance and Leadership

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

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

Groves High School has undergone significant changes during the past five years, including multiple personnel changes in principals, assistant principals, and teachers. In 2011, the school was restructured, and only 49% of the staff was rehired. Of the new hires, almost half were first-year teachers, many of whom were in an alternative certification program. The Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) assigned a School Improvement Specialist to assist with restructuring mandates and various improvement initiatives.

The current principal has been at the school since the second semester of the 2010-2011 school year. In his short tenure, he has established a collaborative governance structure that is embraced by staff, students, parents, and community members. All stakeholder groups praised the principal for his open-door policy and easy accessibility. With the assistance of his leadership team comprised of department chairs, academic coaches, parent-community liaison, and assistant principals, the principal has established policies and procedures to remedy many of the challenges facing the school. Students, teachers, and parents reported that rigor in the classroom has increased under his leadership. Students said that they feel safer at the school this year. Some teachers reported that discipline in the classroom and support from the administration remain inconsistent.

As a part of Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools, the school is under the governance authority of the system's Board of Education as well as district level administrators. The principal said that the district office provides support for his school and for the various initiatives that the school is implementing. However, some teachers reported receiving potentially conflicting communications from the district regarding these initiatives. Together with district support staff, the principal assures that Groves is compliant with local, state, and federal regulations.

The principal has established a communication protocol that staff members confirmed has improved the flow of information as well as collaborative decision-making. The leadership team discusses various issues and events that will take place. Leadership team members talk with smaller groups of staff.
members assuring that everyone knows what is happening or is given the opportunity to express an opinion on decisions that are pending. The leadership team then reconvenes to discuss these issues and to finalize decisions. While the majority staff opinion may not prevail, teachers said they appreciate the consistent opportunity to be heard.

Parents reported that they have access to the administrative team and feel comfortable discussing concerns or expressing opinions. They take part in surveys administered by the district regarding safety and overall satisfaction with the school. Parents expressed concern that progress in school improvement could be thwarted by continuous changes in leadership and teaching personnel.

Students reported that the principal has brought positive change to their school. They bragged that the principal knows their names, even if they have not been in trouble. When asked what they would do if they wanted to make a suggestion for improving the school, students immediately responded that they would email the principal. They said that he will listen to their suggestions on how the school can be better. Students described a vibrant student government organization whose elected leader shares the microphone with the principal for morning announcements and meets regularly with the Superintendent of Chatham County Schools along with student government leaders from other schools to discuss issues. Most of the students at Groves are from economically disadvantaged homes. The principal noted that many of the students have never been on a college campus, some never having gone as far away from home as Savannah. He talks to the student body every morning during announcements, offering straightforward wisdom such as why doing well in school will help them create a successful future.

The leadership team nurtures the Groves learning community, including staff, students, and parents. Student achievement is paramount in the school's focus. Student achievement data, both formative and summative, inform instruction and provide a basis for decisions regarding allocation of resources. The school recently opened a Data Room that will enable staff members to chart student academic progress. Professional development for teachers is designed based on results of a Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards (GAPSS) analysis as well as the school’s commitment to the goals of its successful School Improvement Grant. Professional development, student achievement data analysis, and department collaboration occur weekly. Parents participate in the learning community through various course offerings, including resume writing, interview skills, dressing for success, and parenting skills.

The school uses staff evaluation instruments and processes developed by Chatham County Schools consistent with state guidelines. The school publishes a detailed calendar that indicates scheduled curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities.

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

- The shared governance model and communication protocol provide opportunities for staff and parents to collaborate and participate in school governance.
- Many improvements resulting from restructuring and new leadership are evident throughout the school.
- Parent inclusion in the learning community provides support both for student success and for parent education.

**Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:**

- Revisit discipline policies and procedures to assure they are appropriate and are being implemented consistently.
- Continue to populate the Data Room with student performance data and encourage use of the data to inform instruction.
Finding: Robert W. Groves High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 3: Teaching and Learning

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

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

The school faculty follows curriculum guides that align with Georgia Performance Standards. Teachers submit weekly lesson plans for review and meet weekly in departments and data teams to promote collaboration and consistency of instruction. One teacher commented that these meetings allow teachers to answer the following questions: "Where are the students?; Where do we need them to be?; and, How do we get them there?" Teachers post expectations for student learning in the classroom in the form of standards and essential questions and encourage students through example and repetition to embrace standard-based learning. The curriculum reflects that a commitment to equity and diversity is clearly embraced and celebrated in this school that is multicultural and includes many special needs students. Additionally, a 9th Grade Academy, housed separately from the upper grade levels, helps freshmen navigate the transition to high school smoothly.

Classroom observations indicate teachers use instructional strategies that are research-based, reflective of best practice, and actively engage the majority of students in the learning process. Observed teaching strategies include lecture, oral reading, class discussion, video presentation, worksheets, questions requiring higher order thinking skills, group collaboration, word walls, use of computers for essay writing, and creative expression. One science teacher had each of his students decorate a ceiling tile illustrating an element from the Periodic Table that is displayed overhead in the classroom or hallway. Team members observed occasional deficits, including a need for more differentiated instruction, failure to redirect off-task students, a need for activities encouraging higher order thinking skills, and inaccurate use of math terminology.

Because of restructuring, 51% of this year’s faculty are new to the school, and 24% are new teachers; thus the need for administrative oversight and mentoring is great. One initiative helping to meet this need is THRIVE, a district sponsored program that assigns a mentor to each new faculty member during his or her first two years. Additionally, teachers participate in frequent professional learning opportunities, usually during designated planning periods. In the coming year, a new high school is opening nearby, with the likelihood of approximately 400 students transferring to the new school and a number of teachers potentially being transferred as well. Both teachers and administrators expressed concern at the possibility of losing more staff members who have begun intensive and expensive training for the restructuring process.

Teachers gather data on student achievement through a variety of assessments, including weekly benchmark assessments that foster a positive competition among students and help teachers assess mastery of content and discern areas in need of review and re-teaching. Recently, a data center was set up where student progress is monitored by way of color-coded display boards that identify students in need of
additional support because of failing grades or failure to pass tests required for graduation. Students are directed to a variety of remedial, supportive, or enrichment programs designed to address academic needs, including:

- teacher tutorials;
- the Homework Café, a supervised place to do homework with guidance if needed;
- Twilight, a program that allows students to earn credits after the school day;
- Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID), an elective course that helps bridge the gap between high school and college;
- Gear Up, a partnership with Savannah State College to help students prepare for college;
- 21st Century, an afterschool enrichment program;
- Recovery Friday, an extremely popular biweekly program that helps students overcome deficits, make up work, or prepare for the End of Course Test (EOCT) or the Georgia High School Graduation Tests (GHSGT); and
- Saturday School, a program used both for detention and academic support.

The school day is divided into seven instructional periods to allocate and protect instructional time to support student learning. The annual calendar and the daily schedule are disseminated to all school stakeholders.

The state’s requirement that the school undergo a complete restructuring suggests the seriousness of school deficits just a year ago. Some contributing problems still exist, including a lack of sufficient textbooks, high pupil-teacher ratios, and the depressed socio-economic status of many students. The school has a dress code policy that is neither consistently followed by students nor monitored by the staff. Much of the school is not clean. Team members noted dirty desks, floors, walls, doors, and windows throughout the building, including classrooms, hallways, and the cafeteria. However, faculty, students, parents, and community partners alike report that the school climate this year is remarkably positive, citing the leadership and vision-casting of the principal, caring teachers, positive school slogans, new student support initiatives, and the purchase of $120,000 in new instructional technology (computers and Promethean Boards) as primary reasons. They voiced their belief that the school is making a remarkable turnaround.

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

- The administration, faculty, and staff are spearheading a successful campaign to cast a positive vision of the school by planting the slogan, “Groves is Great,” in the minds of students, parents, and the community.
- Teachers model a collegial, coachable, innovative spirit and a willingness to embrace change to improve instruction.
- The implementation of Recovery Friday, the Data Center, and other student support services is meeting the needs of many students who are struggling academically.
- The purchase of new computers had aided in the implementation of technology into the curriculum.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

- Reduce class sizes as funding becomes available.
- Allocate resources to provide adequate instructional materials.
- Continue to improve instructional quality through professional learning opportunities, especially in the areas of differentiated instruction and use of data.
- Implement procedures to maintain a clean, healthy, and attractive learning environment.
- Preserve continuity of the restructuring process by retaining current teachers and administrators as
much as possible.

- Consistently enforce the dress code policy to help define a positive culture for the school.

Finding: Robert W. Groves High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 4: Documenting and Using Results

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

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

Groves High School is committed to using data to enhance teaching and learning. Data are collected for the four academic disciplines, English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science, using assessments that have been aligned to school learning expectations. Data sources include the 8th grade Criterion Referenced Competency Test for rising 9th graders, End of Course Tests for specific state-selected courses, the Georgia High School Graduation Tests, the ASVAB and ASSET assessments administered by military recruiters that provide aptitude and interest as well as achievement data, and departmental benchmark assessments that check for student progress throughout the year. The school has safeguards in place to ensure validity and reliability as well as test security. Through proctoring, supervision, and confirmed student identification, these safety nets assure integrity of the testing program.

Data are collected and utilized in a variety of ways. Groves has recently established a Data Room where individual student achievement data are organized and monitored. A color coding system informs staff at a quick glance of students in need of special assistance such as tutorial sessions or Recovery Friday. Noted in the school improvement plan and agendas from professional development, the Groves staff is trained in examining data and adjusting teaching to remediate weaknesses and accomplish mastery. Demographic data are utilized to determine subgroups within the school. These subgroups are closely tracked to determine what interventions may be necessary to ensure student success.

The school values perceptions from stakeholders, including parents, community and business partners, central office personnel, students, and teachers. These data are used to confirm instructional and organizational effectiveness.

Groves utilizes formative and summative assessments school-wide. Data from these assessments are examined to determine the effectiveness of instruction and determine remediation. Teachers and administrators indicated that additional common assessments in academic disciplines are being developed to provide a clearer picture of student achievement. These assessments will be aligned to units and standards in the Georgia Performance Standards and the new Common Core Georgia Performance Standards. Samples of these classroom assessments were available for the team to review. The data from common assessments will be utilized in professional learning communities to determine effectiveness of teaching and learning and mastery of standards.

The school provides immediate feedback to students and parents for all national, state, and local assessment data. Student achievement data are posted in some classrooms. When asked what they were
doing with the data, teachers replied that they used assessment results to design remediation, re-teaching moments, ice breakers, and activating strategies. Student success is readily celebrated among administration, staff and students. This celebratory information is shared with community and business stakeholders promptly.

Longitudinal trend data have been closely examined to determine strengths and weakness instructionally. These data have also been utilized to target proven strategies that have been successful in school with similar demographics and student populations. There have been gains in student achievement data in at least two of the school’s academic disciplines. This trend has been documented over two of the past three years. There is an upward trend in student achievement that is measurable and noted in the analysis of data. Achievement data indicates that there have been improvements among subgroups during the past two years.

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

- Some use of data is evident in classrooms and in the Data Room.
- Professional development has been provided in the analysis of data.

**Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:**

- Expand and continue to implement the use of data to enhance teaching and learning.
- Expand the understanding of and use of the Data Room.

**Finding:** Robert W. Groves High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

**Standard 5: Resource and Support Systems**

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

**Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:**

Groves High School has established and implemented processes to recruit and retain highly qualified personnel to meet the needs of the school as confirmed through interviews, observations, and documentation. Building on the state’s intervention during the previous year, the school is hiring a large number of energetic and competent teachers, some new to the field of education. New hires were observed by the QAR team as eager to learn and teachable. The district offers a teacher induction program called THRIVE, which services all new teachers in the county for their first two years with a host of mentor visits and numerous opportunities to observe experienced teachers throughout the county. Interviews with staff provided evidence that professional learning is offered at the school level on an ongoing basis. Professional learning is aligned with Georgia standards and needs that are identified in the School Improvement Plan and the new School Improvement Grant (SIG). Teachers acknowledged that the principal supports and provides professional learning as requested and/or needed.

Staffing needs are determined by program directors and district staff concurrent with the development of the budget. Observations, interviews and documents that were provided indicate the school is fiscally...
sound. Personnel are trained in procedures to maintain facilities to a high standard of cleanliness and safety. However, a QAR team member noted that an upstairs exit door in the gym area was chained and locked, preventing occupants from exiting even during an emergency. Also QAR team members noted that many areas of the school required cleaning. For example, floors were dingy with ground in dirt, debris protruded from under baseboards, and windows in exterior doors were consistently covered with spots and smudges that could be seen from a distance. The school has a facilities work plan and life-cycle maintenance plan.

Students indicated in interviews that they feel safe in their school and also believe their belongings are secure. The security of the school is managed by safety plans developed in accordance with the Georgia Emergency Management Agency, which provides technical assistance to the district. Numerous drills are conducted each year, including fire, severe weather, and intruder drills, to ensure students and staff are familiar with the plans. The district employs two full-time resource officers for Groves. Security plans were available in the school, and evacuation routes are posted in classrooms.

Observations and interviews provided evidence of technology-infused instruction that focuses on student achievement. The district staff provides prompt service for repair of computers and other technology. Classroom observations and interviews with parents, students and staff clearly demonstrated significant attempts to integrate technology effectively. A variety of programs address individual student needs. Interviews and observations provided evidence that the school funds numerous positions to assist students with diverse needs such as graduation coaches, Response to Intervention (RTI) coaches, instructional coaches, Student Support Team coordinators, and student transition coaches.

Student Support Teams foster collaboration among teachers and parents to provide assistance to struggling students. Family Involvement Facilitators work with families in need. Partnerships have been established with Gulf Stream, Georgia Ports Authority, and other organizations to prepare students for life beyond graduation. The district funds a part time social worker. However, it was noted during administration and teacher interviews that there is a need for a full time social worker exclusively for Groves High School. Parents voiced their concern over the lack of a school nurse. They also expressed concern regarding the dramatic turn-over of staff members during the previous year. They cited the effect such changes had on their students and expressed the desire that the principal and teaching staff would remain at Groves next year. They were aware that accomplishing this stability would be challenging as a new school opens in the district near Groves this fall.

**Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:**
- Support from the School Improvement Specialist is making a positive impact.
- The school has abundant financial support for restructuring efforts.
- Professional learning opportunities enhance teacher confidence and effectiveness.

**Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:**
- As funding becomes available, employ a full-time school nurse as well as full time social worker to service the highly transient and economically disadvantaged student population.
- Develop and implement a maintenance plan that will assure a safe and clean environment to enhance student learning.
- As much as possible, maintain stability and continuity during this turn-around process, including personnel in teaching and leadership positions.

Finding: Robert W. Groves High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met
this standard for accreditation.

Standard 6: Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

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

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

Groves High School communicates with parents through monthly newsletters, call-outs (a computerized calling system that notifies parents of school events), personal calls from teachers and administrators, and emails. One parent boasted that he receives an email from the student information system automatically any time his son's teachers enter new grades or notes that a particular assignment has not been submitted. All parents interviewed said that they are informed of student performance on various state-mandated assessments and updated regularly on grades and assignments in their coursework.

Funded by the School Improvement Grant, the school hired a parent-community liaison and established a parent resource center that is open for use during normal school hours. The liaison is responsible for encouraging parent participation in school activities as well as recruiting community/business support for the school. The parent resource center offers information on student assessments, college applications, financial aid opportunities for student education beyond high school, community events, parenting literature, computers with Internet access, printers and much more. Parents are encouraged to use the center to plan for their students' success at Groves High School and at post secondary institutions as well as to seek employment opportunities, write resumes, and gain other information that will help their families. Groves offers monthly classes for parents in resume development, job interview techniques, dressing for success, parenting skills, and other supportive topics.

Parents reported an active Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA), but bemoaned poor attendance. They indicated that the school could depend on a small percentage of parents to attend PTSA, lead booster club activities, volunteer at the school, and participate in school activities. They described somewhat unsuccessful attempts to attract other parents to participate more actively in Groves' activities.

Parents praised the open-door policy of the current administration, saying that they feel welcome and their opinions valued. When asked if they were part of the decision-making process, they described surveys they had taken and cited incidences of the school leaders listening to their input and taking action. One parent said that the principal would listen to her and be honest about whether her idea was possible.

The school hosted a Groves Day activity during the first semester. Community organizations as well as Groves clubs and staff members set up activity booths and welcomed students and parents. Prices were kept to a minimum to ensure that students and parents could afford to be on campus and participate. The event was attended by over 400 people and was deemed a success, as evidenced by requests for a Groves Day 2.

Groves High School enjoys collaboration with various community organizations and businesses. The QAR Team met with stakeholders from the Army National Guard, Savannah Tech, Domino's Pizza, Gulfstream, Savannah State University, various alumni, the faith-based community, and a member of the city council. All stakeholders expressed the belief that the school has improved dramatically this year and pledged support for Groves' continued improvement. One alumni was a member of the first graduating
class of the school over 50 years ago. He expressed pride in the school and his desire that the school would remain a community school with the full support of the Chatham County School's district office.

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

- The parent liaison provides effective support for parents and engages various community businesses and organizations.
- The Parent Resource Center provides helpful information, materials, and technology for parent use.
- Many classes are offered for parents to help them support their students as well as improve themselves personally.
- Groves enjoys strong support from its community and alumni.
- Groves Day is a successful way of engaging the community, parents, and students.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

- Continue to seek active participation by a majority of parents.
- Expand collaborations with the business, higher education, military, faith-based, and other community groups.

Finding: Robert W. Groves High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 7: Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

Description - The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

Because of its failure to meet Annual Yearly Progress under the No Child Left Behind Law for multiple years, Groves High School is in the beginning stages of a state-mandated restructuring process. The school is required to follow the state's Turn-Around Model, which includes specific goals and action steps that are designed to improve instructional and organizational effectiveness. This model constitutes the school improvement plan for Groves and was developed based on a careful study of the school's vision as well as identified deficiencies that have caused the school not to make Adequate Yearly Progress. The model has been coordinated with Groves’ School Improvement Grant, Race to the Top requirements, and SACS standards, offering the school both direction and funds to support improvement efforts. The model calls for quarterly monitoring by the Georgia Department of Education, resulting in an evaluation of improvement efforts and recommendations for future improvement of student achievement.

Groves High School underwent the Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards (GAPSS) in March, 2011. In keeping with the GAPSS analysis, the school is focusing on four tiers of improvement: Continuous Growth of Student Academic Achievement; Safe, Secure, and Disciplined Learning Environment; Community Engagement; and Fiscal Responsibility. These goals are also embedded in the school's Turn-Around Model from the state.

As part of the Turn-Around Model, professional development is mandated for all staff members to assure
that everyone understands what the school must do in order to become effective and to improve student achievement. Initial training occurred prior to the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year. Teachers participate in professional development classes each Tuesday during their planning times. These sessions primarily focus on effective instructional strategies and how to use data to inform instruction.

The school embraces various means of informing and engaging stakeholders in its improvement efforts. This is achieved through the use of the school website, annual reports to the community, newsletters, and student handbooks. The parent liaison actively solicits partnerships and collaborations with local businesses, community organizations, and educational institutions. Her goal is to engage these stakeholders in the improvement efforts that are being implemented at Groves.

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

- The school has successfully communicated its goals and school improvement efforts to all stakeholders.
- The school is successfully integrating goals from a variety of funding sources in order to comply with its restructuring goals and requirements.

**Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:**

- Continue the alignment of grant-based initiatives.
- Follow the state's Turn-Around Model to assure organizational effectiveness and student achievement.
- Continuously measure and celebrate improvement in student achievement.

**Finding:** Robert W. Groves High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.
Conclusion

The commendations and required actions in this report are designed to focus the school on those areas that will have the greatest impact on student performance and school effectiveness. While powerful in potential, the commendations and required actions only have meaning when acted upon by the school. The strength of this report lies in the school's commitment to using the findings to continuously improve. The key is action. The school 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 will need to address. Following this review, the school 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 School Administration, members of the professional staff, students, parents and other community representatives for their hospitality throughout the visit. The team wishes the school and its students much success in the quest for excellence through SACS-CASI-GA accreditation with AdvancED.
Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Dr. Pam Adamson, Chair/Lead Evaluator
- Mr. Mike Crosby, Team Member (Savannah Christian Preparatory School)
- Mr. David Williams, Team Member (Appling County High School)
- Mrs. Wendy K. Lewis, Team Member

AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

The AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools are comprehensive statements of quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for schools to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness. As schools 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 school establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the school.

Governance and Leadership
The school provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and school effectiveness.

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

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

Resource and Support Systems
The school has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships
The school fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement
The school establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.