Report of the
Quality Assurance Review Team for
Islands High School
170 Whitemarsh Island Rd
Savannah, Georgia, United States 31410-2098

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

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 2 members of the administrative team, 15 students, 9 parents, and 23 teachers. 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:**
The administration and staff have created a supportive, safe, and nurturing environment for learning in which respect and trust between staff and students are evident.

**Evidence:**
During interviews with teachers, students, and parents, stakeholders consistently described the climate as conducive to learning. Teachers expressed appreciation for an environment in which they could devote their efforts to instruction rather than disciplinary issues. Students and parents stated they felt the school is a safe place where teachers and administrators are supportive and show genuine concern for each student. The QAR
Team members saw evidence of this climate during observations and walk-throughs.

Rationale:
Creating a safe environment characterized by mutual respect and genuine concern for others allows staff and students to focus on learning. When students feel safe and cared for, they put forth their best efforts to achieve and want to be present at school.

Commendation 2

Commendation Statement:
The administration has provided common planning time for each department and has dedicated a wing of the school for each department.

Evidence:
Each wing of the school houses classrooms dedicated by department, as evidenced by the facility map and QAR Team observations. Non-academic departments are located appropriately.

Rationale:
The proximity of classrooms by content area in wings facilitates productivity and collaboration. Teachers are able to communicate more readily and share resources. The common planning allows collaboration within each department in order to discuss instructional strategies, analyze data, and develop interventions to impact student performance.

Commendation 3

Commendation Statement:
The principal has a vision of where the school needs to be and a willingness to work to achieve that vision.

Evidence:
The principal shared her vision of where she wants the school to be in four years and beyond that time. That vision was expressed by leadership team members and teachers during interviews. Students stated some understanding of the vision by articulating goals for expanded curricular and extra-curricular programs, growth in student enrollment, and increased student performance.

Rationale:
A clearly articulated vision provides a foundation for support of school improvement efforts. By sharing a personal vision for Islands High School as it grows, the principal has fostered excitement and acceptance by staff and students for high expectations to fulfill that vision. Having a shared purpose and direction unites the school and community and helps stakeholders feel a sense of ownership as the school establishes its own culture and identity.

Commendation 4

Commendation Statement:
Staff members have created multiple levels of support for students through staff and program interventions.
Evidence:
QAR Team observations, interviews, and review of artifacts confirmed numerous opportunities for student support. In addition to the required interventions such as Response to Intervention (RtI) and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), staff members have developed strategies to assist students who are struggling. The Homework Café, recovery contracts, departmental tutorials each day Monday through Thursday after school, and individualized tutorials support student achievement. Students commented they felt comfortable asking teachers for help and found teachers always willing to provide assistance, even if the teacher was not the student’s regular instructor. Students also praised the guidance counselors for their role in providing assistance in career planning, goal setting, and personal development concerns.

Rationale:
Providing quality interventions that are readily accessible to students establishes support for learning beyond the regular classroom instruction. When students feel comfortable accessing interventions with no stigma attached for needing help, the opportunities for impacting student achievement increase exponentially.

Commendation 5

Commendation Statement:
The school has provided opportunities for students to develop leadership skills and to impact the climate and culture of the school.

Evidence:
QAR Team review of artifacts indicated student involvement as leaders in the school. The Student Senate, Student Council, Peer Mediation Teams, clubs, and extra-curricular activities all provide venues for student leadership. During QAR Team interviews with students, all student participants spoke of their involvement in leadership opportunities. They also indicated awareness of their role in helping create the climate and culture pervasive in the school after less than two years of its opening, recognizing their opinions have been heard and validated through changes implemented based on their input. The establishment of a school store and placement of mirrors in the girls’ restrooms resulted from student input.

Rationale:
Developing students as leaders establishes a strong core to champion policies and practices of a school. These leaders also serve as spokespersons for the entire student body and provide invaluable perspectives regarding student issues that administrators and teachers can use to improve the school setting. Including student leaders in discussions and listening to their comments have given them an opportunity to establish a school identity and to shape a culture embraced by the entire student body.

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:
Engage representative stakeholder groups in each phase of the continuous improvement process.

Evidence:
Interviews with stakeholders and review of artifacts revealed the school involves stakeholders in some facets of the school improvement process. However, evidence indicated that no parents or community members specific to IHS were directly involved in the review and adoption of the school’s vision and mission statements as the school was being established. Additionally, all stakeholders were not involved in developing the school assessment report process for accreditation, the development, review, and monitoring of the school improvement process, or the development of the School Accountability Plan. Stakeholder input has been sought through survey responses. Parents indicated a general sense that the school was doing well in meeting the needs of the students, but they indicated they had no involvement in the improvement process.

Rationale:
Including parent and community stakeholders in the processes of continuous improvement is stipulated in Standard 7, Indicator 2. Engagement of representative stakeholders ensures a more complete perspective of and support for the school improvement efforts. Improvement efforts can then be better sustained and awareness of progress is more widespread throughout the community.

Required Action 2

Required Action:
Provide support to teachers in consensus building, research-based practices, comprehensive data analysis and use of data, and continuous improvement to meet accountability goals.

Evidence:
Interviews with teachers and staff members revealed gaps in teacher training that could be addressed through a targeted professional learning process. Some staff felt more consensus building is needed to maximize collaboration and promote ownership of strategies and interventions for improving student learning. When teachers were asked about research-based practices, they stated use of standards based instruction in the classroom, but were unable to articulate specific strategies being implemented. While some differentiated instruction was observed during classroom visits, research-based practices were not pervasive throughout the school. The data room, staff comments during interviews, and review of artifacts indicated a narrow focus on student achievement data related to eight subjects assessed by End of Course Tests with a few Georgia High School Graduation Test assessments included. A comprehensive data analysis and use of data were not apparent. Including attendance rates, discipline data, failure rates, graduation rate, and other assessment data would provide a more complete analysis of school and student performance. The leadership team and teachers voiced their participation in the development and use of the School Accountability Plan and their department plans, but they were unable to articulate a continuous improvement plan other than one year at a time focused on EOCT and GHSGT (Georgia High School Graduation Test) performance.

Rationale:
Providing relevant, job-embedded professional learning supports teachers in their efforts to improve student achievement. Building consensus unites staff and provides focus for their instruction. Research-based practices for instruction create a learning environment characterized by differentiation, critical thinking, and rigor in all content areas. Using comprehensive data provides an accurate measure of school improvement when a variety of student performance results are used. Being aware of the continuous improvement process associated with the AdvancED standards provides guidance for engaging all stakeholders in the process and for analyzing progress.
on all facets of the school improvement plan (School Accountability Plan) and not solely on a limited perspective of student academic performance.

**Required Action 3**

**Required Action:**

Work together to structure roles and responsibilities for more balanced and shared leadership to support the vision and mission of the school.

**Evidence:**

Interviews with the leadership team, teachers, and students revealed the principal is perceived to be handling the majority of the administrative tasks at the school. Teachers indicated that the assistant principal handles some discipline and serves as the testing coordinator. An interview with the assistant principal confirmed these responsibilities. Stakeholders expressed concerns that the principal has so much to do that priorities cannot always be addressed readily.

**Rationale:**

An administrative team functions most effectively when all members agree on and accept responsibility for shared leadership. To accomplish this balance successfully, each member assumes responsibilities for tasks related to his or her personal and professional strengths or obtains the necessary skills to complete the tasks. As the student population at IHS increases, the expectation of stakeholders is that at least one more assistant principal will be added to the administrative team. Dividing responsibilities more equally among administrators will strengthen support for teachers and students while allowing each administrator to function more effectively.

**Required Action 4**

**Required Action:**

Provide adequate science laboratories to support student learning and to fulfill its purpose as a school emphasizing Biological and Environmental Science.

**Evidence:**

QAR Team members observed a makeshift science lab being used for 16 sections of science at the school. The lab does not have all safety equipment required for science labs and creates limitations for student experiments needed to fulfill curricular standards. All stakeholders commented during interviews that the current lab is inadequate, but acknowledged the ongoing construction of one science lab scheduled for completion so it can be used by August 2012. Stakeholders also indicated two additional science labs are slated, but a completion date has not been determined.

**Rationale:**

The Biological and Environmental Sciences program is the premier program drawing students to the school. However, the lack of adequate science lab facilities has created difficulties for both teachers and students to overcome. Although teachers have been creative in converting the space provided for a lab and in scheduling classes for science experiments in the lab, stakeholders eagerly await completion of lab facilities that will support instruction, provide an appropriate and safe classroom, engage students in hands-on activities, and promote the vision and mission of the school.

**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 Islands 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 vision for Islands High School is “From school to the world: All students prepared for productive purposes.” The mission of the school is “To ignite a passion for learning and teaching at high levels.” Both the vision and mission statements were created by a district level Guiding Coalition, comprised of district stakeholders, in May 2006. When Islands High School opened in 2010, it adopted the district’s vision and mission to ensure alignment and focus. All stakeholders interviewed by the team knew the intent of the vision and purpose of the school and embraced them as a part of daily practices. It was evident, however, that the school’s stakeholders had little involvement in the development or review of these statements, but had accepted them. An annual review of the vision and mission by all stakeholders can strengthen support of and provide opportunities for collaboration in reaching student performance goals.

A School Accountability Plan (SAP) serves as the one year improvement plan for the school and aligns with the comprehensive District Accountability System (DAS). Both documents require annual review and analysis. Interviews by the QAR Team revealed that parents had not been included in the development or review of the SAP. Administrators and teachers created the SAP, but the document was shared with others on a limited basis. The SAP is comprised of four focus areas with specific goals for each area. The four focus areas are aligned with the vision: Focus Area 1-Continuous Growth of Student Academic Achievement; Focus Area 2-Safe, Secure, and Disciplined Learning Environment; Focus Area 3-Community Engagement; and, Focus Area 4-Fiscal Responsibility. Strategies designed to accomplish goals set for each focus area and a review of available performance data guide the teaching and learning process.

Interviews with the principal, leadership team, and teachers affirmed that the vision and mission have guided decision-making as the school implements its strategies to accomplish the goals that fulfill the focus areas of the SAP. The data room contained visual charts for tracking performance and progress of students based on End of Course Tests. Teachers stated in interviews and artifact review confirmed that other assessment data are used to identify student performance strengths and weaknesses so decisions for instruction and interventions can be determined. While the school has attempted to involve outside stakeholders in various components of its operation, including them as part of the team to promote student achievement has been limited.

Maintaining a profile of the school, its students, and the community has helped the administrators and
teachers make decisions about what is needed to advance its vision and mission. School stakeholders recognize the school population is comprised of students who have been in public school for many years and of students who have entered IHS from private or home school settings. The socio-economic levels of students are also extremely diverse. Although school staff recognize these diverse factors, they are committed to providing a rigorous and high quality education for all of their students and accept the high expectations for the school which were articulated by students and parents.

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

- The district’s vision and mission statements have been embraced by the Islands High School stakeholders and are reflected in the daily practices at the school.
- The School Accountability Plan aligns with the District Accountability System to ensure a unified approach to fulfilling the vision and mission.

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

- Engage stakeholders in a periodic review of the vision and mission to build consensus, ensure continued relevance, and maintain a focus of improvement efforts.

Finding: Islands 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:

Islands High School operates under the jurisdiction of the Savannah Chatham Public School System Board of Education. Therefore, the school is required to follow all policies and procedures adopted by the local board. Compliance with board policies and procedures was evident in artifacts such as the teacher handbook, the student code of conduct, and the School Accountability Plan. Interviews with the principal, leadership team, teachers, students, and parents revealed a clear understanding of the chain of command in dealing with school matters. All stakeholders stated the principal is visible in the school, knows students by name, and maintains an “open door” policy. Students expressed admiration of the principal and teachers for having high levels of involvement in school activities, remaining informed about individual student performance, and providing opportunities for student leadership. Teachers confirmed they are involved in decision-making. Through principal assurances, strategic planning, policies, procedures, and monitoring, the school ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations. The Standards Assessment Report, artifacts, and interviews with school personnel verified efforts to maintain compliance in all areas.

The principal is empowered by the superintendent and school board to make decisions regarding the school staff, school procedures, and school operations that provide for the effective functioning of the school. One example of the principal’s authority to tailor policies to the school needs is found in her waiver for cell phone usage which is being used as a model by other schools in the district. Additionally,
the principal is responsible for administering the school’s budget allocations and for notifying the district office when needs occur. The principal maintains communication with district personnel and has worked collaboratively to ensure completion of a science lab and veterinary science lab, both of which are currently under construction and much needed to support instruction and the school’s role as a Biological and Environmental Sciences facility.

Teachers and administrators work together to employ a system that provides for analysis and review of student performance and school effectiveness while providing a venue for shared decision-making. A review of artifacts and interview responses revealed that a variety of strategies are used to fulfill this indicator, but more attention needs to be given to a more comprehensive analysis of data for instructional and planning purposes. Teachers use formative assessments, benchmark assessments, unit tests, student projects, and End-of-Course Tests (EOCT) , but teachers discussed EOCT data analysis as the driving focus of their improvement efforts. The data room provided visual charts plotting student performance on EOCTs. The Targeted Tuesdays collaborations are used to discuss data, and Instructional Thursdays discussions focus on common assessment data by content area. A more comprehensive use of data for planning instruction and services should include data related to attendance, discipline, and student longitudinal data which can identify trends in student achievement. The narrow focus of data analysis on common assessments and EOCT results for eight subjects limits the school’s perspective in tracking student performance.

Team members observed during classroom visits that staff members foster a learning community where students and teachers feel secure and empowered. Both students and teachers commented about their opportunities to lead. Students are involved in student government, Student Senate, clubs, extracurricular activities, and peer mediation teams. Teachers serve in various capacities in the building and act as advisors to students, sponsors of clubs, and coaches of teams. Common planning by content area has fostered a sense of community for teachers and has allowed Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to function effectively.

Stakeholders confirmed the administrators control curricular and extra-curricular activities that are sponsored by the school. As a relatively new school, IHS has limited extra-curricular and curricular activities. Teachers often serve dual roles of instructor and coach as human resources are limited. A full-range of curricular offerings has not been possible because of the small number of staff members. Administrators, teachers, students, and parents all expressed excitement over plans to: build a new gym to accommodate high school athletics; establish a football team; implement a veterinary science program; and complete the science lab. They expressed hopes that as the school population increases, more staff will be added to allow enhancements in existing programs such as gifted, Advanced Placement, and Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) programs. They also anticipate implementing a JROTC (Junior Reserved Officers Training Corps) program and expanding the CTAE Pathways. These additions will provide a more comprehensive educational environment to meet the needs of all students at IHS.

All stakeholders expressed the opinion that the school responds to their expectations. Comments during interviews revealed numerous strategies employed to keep parents informed, surveys to gather parent/community perceptions, and community partnerships. Parents and students stated the school has high expectations that mirror their own. Students commented they felt comfortable speaking to administrators if they felt a teacher was not maintaining high expectations in class instruction, management, and assignments.

Teachers, staff, and parents articulated they can go to the principal with ideas or concerns and be heard. While volunteers are few in number, the school welcomes them as part of their open door approach. Through surveys, meetings, emails, phone calls, and newsletters, the school leaders are able to
gather information regarding community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction in order to respond appropriately.

As part of the leadership responsibility, building administrators have implemented an evaluation system that provides for the professional growth of all personnel. Administrators use informal observations, instructional walk-throughs, and the Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program (GTEP) instruments (Georgia Teacher Observation Instrument and Georgia Teacher Duties and Responsibilities Instrument) as an evaluation system for teacher performance and effectiveness. The administrative staff reviews lesson plans and completes classroom walk-throughs to verify that standards are taught. Professional learning is based on needs related to the SAP and requested by teachers to be more effective instructors and to provide support for student achievement goals.

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

- The principal has created a school climate in which teachers and students are empowered to be leaders, to effect change, and to foster a supportive school culture.
- Staff members encourage and support one another and students while promoting respectful and collaborative behavior throughout the school.
- Providing common planning time by departments has allowed teachers to collaborate regularly and to address instructional and student performance needs.

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

- Provide parents and community members meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership.
- Include parents and non-certified staff members on committees to develop and review the School Accountability Plan and to monitor its implementation.
- Expand roles and responsibilities for more balanced administrative leadership.

**Finding:** Islands 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:**

A combination of documented evidence and personal interviews with stakeholders revealed that the school effectively develops and implements curriculum based upon clearly defined expectations for student learning. Classroom observations and the review of lesson plans validated the school’s use of and adherence to curriculum guides.

Students, particularly those taking part in the Biological and Environmental Sciences Program, have the opportunity to explore the application of higher-order thinking skills and apply their learning in real-world situations (i.e., weekly trips to Oatland Island Wildlife Center, participation in Beach Sweep, etc.).
Interviews with students revealed that they are involved in a number of curricular and extra-curricular activities that allow them to apply concepts learned in the classroom (i.e., Student Government, Future Educators Association, etc.). Students expressed that they take great pride in applying their knowledge and experiences as they have a hand in the development of their school’s culture.

Samples of formative and summative assessments indicated that teachers closely monitor academic progress in all core subject areas. Observations in inclusion classrooms showed that both regular education and special education teachers use formative assessment data to modify their instructional practices. EOCT data in the data room seems to be used in more of a reactionary manner than in a proactive manner. Interviews with the school leadership team revealed that the data are used to differentiate instruction after EOCTs have been taken.

Reviews of lesson plans show that while the majority of teachers implement instructional practices that are research-based, this is not pervasive throughout the school. Much of the curriculum, that which is enriched and/or accelerated, meets the needs of many students. However, particular attention needs to be given to meeting the needs of moderate to low-level learners as well as those in “at-risk” subgroups. Classroom observations revealed intermittent, but not consistent, use of differentiated instruction.

Much discussion was shared in regard to the emphasis that is placed on students exceeding the standard on EOCTs. The School Accountability Plan also documents the school’s analysis of previous years’ writing data from the Reading/Writing GHSGT and Literature EOCT. Using this data, IHS has committed to improving students’ writing and conventions skills to increase the percentage of ninth and tenth grade students who pass EOCTs. Students interviewed represented a variety of ethnicities and cultures. All appeared to be respectful of their peers and they valued their contributions to the school culture.

All stakeholders expressed that school administration does an outstanding job of protecting instructional time. Teachers expressed gratitude for the administration’s conscious effort to keep distractions out of the classroom so that teachers can focus on teaching. Classroom observations revealed that teachers begin instruction in a timely manner and do not waste valuable instructional time.

Common planning time and close proximity of content area classrooms afford teachers the opportunity to meet both formally and informally to build rapport and trust, interact, plan, and share thoughts and ideas. There was no mention or evidence of collaboration between ninth grade teachers and eighth grade teachers to discuss the transition between middle and high school.

Various interventions to help students meet expectations for learning are in place. Artifacts and stakeholder interviews revealed remediation, Homework Café, RTI (Response to Intervention), and Targeted Tuesdays planning as common interventions.

All stakeholders expressed their pleasure with the school environment. Transitions between classes were very quiet and orderly. Both adults and students were respectful of their peers and each other. Stakeholders also expressed they felt safe both physically and emotionally. Interviews with teachers indicated that not having ample time to handle administrative tasks is perhaps a barrier to administrators’ consistent disciplinary practices.

Despite being a second year school with limited instructional resources, there is considerable use of current technology throughout many of the classrooms (i.e., CPS units, SmartBoards, LED projectors, laptops, etc.). Levels of implementation of instructional technology vary.

**Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:**
IHS has a strong sense of community and respect. Students have a strong sense of pride in knowing that they are instrumental in molding a developing school culture.

School administration makes a conscious effort to protect instructional time so that teachers can focus on teaching. This is greatly appreciated by the faculty.

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

- Engage all teachers in implementing research-based instructional strategies.

Finding: Islands 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:

The School Accountability Plan provides a framework of performance measures for student learning that yield reliable, valid, and bias free information. IHS uses common assessments based on the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) in each core subject area. These assessments include questions from the Online Assessment System (OAS) and USA TestPrep. Instructional Thursday bi-monthly meetings provide a time for teachers to analyze data from these assessments. School level common assessment data are compared to student scores on state assessments to establish validity.

In addition to common assessments, formative assessments, unit tests, and progress monitoring are used to evaluate student progress. There are emerging efforts to utilize longitudinal data to assess student performance and identify needs of each student. Interviews with the leadership team and teachers, as well as review of artifacts posted in the data room, revealed a focus on EOCT results as the primary measure of student progress. The EOCT data are used to make instructional revisions for the next semester, thus creating a reactionary change system, rather than a pro-active change system, for impacting instruction. This limited perspective dealing with eight subjects for evaluating performance growth does not allow the school a complete analysis of learning that occurs. Some teachers indicated they use ongoing progress monitoring and adjust instruction accordingly. Other data are used for placement purposes but not for impacting instruction to meet learning needs. A more comprehensive assessment system for evaluating progress toward student learning expectations is needed.

School personnel indicated in interviews that they use assessment data for making decisions for improvement of teaching and learning processes. Through Targeted Tuesdays and Instructional Thursdays, they have a time to review student performance and discuss areas that need attention. Teachers commented that common planning time by department has facilitated collaborative efforts for planning instruction and developing interventions to promote student performance. Students told team members that teachers talk to them about their performance in class, offering praise for achievement and encouragement with interventions when needed.
Artifact review by QAR Team members and interviews with teachers and the leadership team revealed a concerted effort to analyze instructional and organizational effectiveness and use results to improve student performance. The SAP is evaluated annually based on student performance on state tests along with results of stakeholder surveys to address non-academic goals in the plan. Because the focus of the evaluation for the SAP and data room are on the EOCT and GHSGT results, a systematic process for monitoring ongoing student achievement and its impact on day-to-day learning has not been articulated.

The school disseminates student achievement information appropriately to all stakeholders. Academic reports are given to students and parents every 4.5 weeks. Parents indicated they can request progress reports weekly or more often if necessary. They also verified during interviews that the parent access to Power School real time data for attendance, discipline, and grades was extremely useful. Electronic communications and phone calls between teachers and parents were cited as other methods of staying informed. School performance data is available on district, state, and federal websites and is published periodically in the news media.

All stakeholders verified during interviews and the team members reviewed evidence in artifacts that school successes are shared. Staff meetings, newspaper articles, district and school websites, student led video broadcasts, SharkBytes, and IHS Facebook page are all venues for celebrating success. Students and teachers indicated a rewards system is in place for recognizing student and staff achievement.

The SCCPSS has a procedure in place for tracking and comparing data between schools of similar size within the district and area. Results of various state and national tests can be accessed through the district’s intranet site. Because IHS is relatively new, trend data is limited for the school and has not yet been calculated. School leaders indicated the teachers are beginning to access state longitudinal data for some students and will be able to use the data to determine trends to some extent. However, because many of the IHS students have not attended public schools in recent years, gaps in longitudinal data will exist. Administrators and leaders expressed a desire to use trend data for the school as soon as possible. They expressed the intent to use 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 data to begin evaluating trends in student performance. In order to have a comprehensive system for evaluating student performance, trend data beyond EOCTs and GHSGTs should be included in the review and analysis.

Student performance results related to the SAP were posted in the data room and discussed by all stakeholders during interviews. The growth in student performance was apparent, and teachers and students recognized achievement levels on EOCTs and GHSGTs are good at IHS, but all expressed the desire to improve. Significant growth in EOCT performance was documented by comparing first semester 2011-2012 results to the 2010-2011 results. Efforts of administrators and teachers to track student performance, provide interventions, and adjust instruction has led to success indicated by the school’s meeting or exceeding the district’s and state’s scores in nearly every subject assessed by an EOCT. One area of progress the school will begin to assess is the graduation rate. No trend data exists for this measurement of success, since the Class of 2011, with approximately 100 graduates, was the first graduating class for IHS.

Through interviews, review of policies and procedures, and examination of other artifacts, the QAR Team found evidence of a secure, accurate, and complete student record system that complies with state and federal regulations. Student information is protected and shared only with those authorized to have access. All data systems are password protected and continually updated. The Information Specialist inputs or alters student information. Parent access to the parent portal in Power School is protected by confidential and individual password accounts for online access to the parent’s child’s information. Records are housed appropriately in a permanent, protected storage vault. Power School and Power Teacher are accessed by those who complete training and are given authorization.
Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- The faculty demonstrates a strong belief in the value of assessments to improve and alter instructional practices.
- The staff strives to articulate clearly in a most personal manner the assessment data to parents and students. Students stated unequivocally that their teachers will tell them how they are performing and therefore show that they “care about them.”

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

- Expand the set of assessments for more comprehensive data analysis.
- Conduct professional learning activities in departmental meetings related to analysis of assessment results.
- Share in departmental meetings how data analysis has been used to assist in improving instruction for individual students or has fostered altered instruction in the classroom.

Finding: Islands 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:

The administration carefully recruits, interviews, and selects highly qualified teachers and staff based on their credentials and experience. All staff members meet certification and licensure requirements as evidenced in teacher credentials. Due to an influx of students at the beginning of the second year of operation, additional teachers were added to the faculty after the tenth day of school. There was no formalized process in place to introduce these new employees to the school; however, through interviews, teachers validated that they individually went out of their way to make the new employees feel welcome. Since Islands High School is a small school, the faculty is small and required to assist with extra duties such as coaching and sponsoring clubs. Teachers commented that the administration appears to be stretched thin. There are two guidance counselors and one assistant principal that could be used to share leadership duties as needed. As the population of the school increases, the district may allocate another assistant principal.

Targeted Tuesdays are the first and third Tuesdays of each month and Instructional Thursdays are the second and fourth Thursdays of each month. These times are set aside as dedicated professional preparation times. Meeting notes are kept by department in notebooks in the school’s Data Room. Additional professional learning activities are provided in accordance to the SAP and school needs.

The vision of the school is to prepare students for productive futures. A sufficient number of staff members have been provided to support the purpose of the school. Use of space, time, and fiscal resources are considered by administration when making allocations. Many decisions are made on a district level and
implemented at a site level.

Although the district has promised funding for the Biological and Environmental Science program, at this time three Science labs and Veterinary Science area are not complete. The faculty and staff at Islands High School designed creative use of one functional lab that houses sixteen sections of lab science. Teachers have been very careful to choose lab assignments that can be completed safely in this space. Similarly, teachers have elected to use supplemental educational material when the appropriate numbers of textbooks are not available. Teachers have worked creatively to write a grant to establish a garden that will be planted, maintained, and tended by students. Eventually the products of the garden will be used to feed the animals in the veterinary clinic.

There is an established accounting and budgeting system for allocating and managing financial resources. Records are audited and internal controls are consistently followed as evidenced by the annual budget and minutes from staff meetings regarding the budget.

As a new school less than two years old that was retrofitted from a middle school, the administration has created a physically welcoming and inviting work space for the students and teachers. During student interviews, several students mentioned the need to update the number of boys’ restrooms (urinals) and height of the drinking fountains. The school is clean and well maintained. Faculty, staff, students, and parents believe that it is a safe environment. The school’s written crisis management plan outlines specifically details to manage a crisis. The template has recently been updated and is a bit confusing to follow. Each classroom is required to have a crisis “flip book” to use as a quick guide in the event of an emergency. When several students and teachers were asked about this plan, they had a difficult time articulating the specifics. Training on crisis management takes place during pre-planning but may need to be reviewed periodically during the school year. The school has a dedicated resource officer that is on campus during school hours and has a very good relationship with students.

Students, parents, and teachers praised the accessibility of the guidance counselors. All groups interviewed were very proud of the peer mediation program moderated by the counselors. Students were especially proud of their involvement in this program. Counselors provide newsletters and college programs for parents and students, work with students to determine their career pathway, and assist with applications to college.

Special needs students are mainstreamed appropriately into regular education classrooms, as was observed by team members during classroom visits and verified during teacher interviews. Inclusion teachers work with regular education class teachers to implement modifications in accordance with their Individual Education Plans. Special education students attend basketball games, the talent show, and other out of school activities.

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

- Teachers and the administration have been creative in using resources to begin and grow the Biological and Environmental Science program without appropriate lab space. Teachers have worked cooperatively and collaboratively to make the learning environment engaging and enriching for students in this program while waiting for district resources to be allocated.

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

- Update and schedule crisis management training and drills.
Finding: Islands 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:

The school fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning. Comments during interviews with stakeholders verified partnerships with agencies such as Oatland Island Wildlife Center to allow students hands-on experiences to support learning in the field of science. Students also participate in field trips to the beach, where they work with marine agencies and conduct experiments and research related to the Biological and Environmental Science program. Other collaboration to assist students is evident in community service work by students and through joint projects with YMCA, Second Harvest, and faith-based organizations. The principal and leadership team members indicated a desire to expand partnerships to strengthen collaboration with the community and provide more opportunities to support student learning.

The QAR Team reviewed documents and heard comments from all stakeholders that revealed the school’s efforts to communicate with stakeholders. Newsletters, daily emails (Shark Bytes), web sites, Power School parent portal, teacher to parent emails and phone calls, Facebook, and Twitter are several communication methods being used. However, responses during leadership team, teacher, and parent interviews indicated the only apparent formal channels for listening to stakeholders are periodic surveys and the principal’s “Open Door” policy. Student input occurs through student government, clubs, and student leadership opportunities. Parents indicated they were not involved in the development of the school’s vision, mission, school accountability plan, or continuous improvement efforts. Support staff expressed their involvement in supporting the vision, mission, and goals in the accountability plan. Responses indicated a need for more comprehensive involvement of representative stakeholders from various groups as a part of the school improvement process and continuous monitoring of progress of improvement efforts.

Teachers shared information about a few instances in which stakeholder knowledge and skills have been solicited. Partnerships associated with some of the academic programs also provide opportunities for stakeholders to share their expertise with students. Efforts to gather more participation of stakeholders to enhance the work of the schools have resulted in willing support with resources from parents and community members. However, participation in PTSA and other parent-oriented activities has not risen to the level anticipated or desired by school personnel. The school is attempting to gain more stakeholder involvement and support in order to increase the amount of and diversity in participation.

The school values its stakeholders as an integral part of the current and future successes of the students and the school. The faculty has laid a foundation that can be expanded for engaging the students, parents, and other stakeholders and information regarding the goals, activities, assessments, and expectations has been provided to all. The use of newsletters, printed communications, electronic communication, public forums, personal contact and other forms of correspondence are designed to reach the diversity of the school’s population.
Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- The faculty strongly believes in the value of the school’s stakeholders and the impact they can have.
- Staff members have utilized a wide range of avenues to engage their stakeholders through emails, newsletters, websites, call out message system, Power School parent portal, Facebook, and Twitter.
- Faculty members have demonstrated belief in the transparency of students’ learning, goals, and performance to the stakeholders.
- The methods of open communication and encouragement to parents and students via Power School, direct emails, callouts, and personal conferences demonstrate the school’s commitment to keeping parents informed.

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

- Establish a systematic method for engaging the stakeholders, especially in decision-making and continuous improvement efforts.
- Distribute the responsibilities of from and to whom, when, and where specific types of information will be disseminated.
- Continue to survey parents, students, and community stakeholders in relation to school safety, instructional effectiveness, and any other pertinent topics related to IHS specifically.

Finding: Islands 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:

The QAR Team interviews revealed the school leadership team meets regularly to align improvement efforts to the school’s vision – From school to the world: All students prepared for the world – and purpose (mission) – to ignite a passion for learning and teaching at high levels. The School Accountability Plan shows evidence of specific goals and interventions to improve student performance through: increasing the percentage of ninth & tenth grade students who pass EOCTs by analyzing writing data; meeting pass rate percentage goals on Social Studies GHSGT, U.S. History EOCT, and Economics EOCT by employing USA Test Prep tutorials, Homework Café, released EOCT items, and classroom tests structured in the format of EOCTs; matching the FDREA (First District Regional Education Services Agency) pass rate of 75% on the math GHSGT and raising the passing rate of the Math I and II EOCTs to 55% by identifying, monitoring, and supporting students who struggle in math.

Although the leadership team meets regularly to engage in the process of continuous improvement, the team is limited to department heads and school administration, as stated during interviews with school personnel. Consideration should be given to having representation from a greater cross-section of the school by including classified personnel, a counselor, and the media specialist. While communication with stakeholders is exceptional, parent and staff comments indicated input from parents and community has been minimal.
The School Accountability Plan shows clear evidence that continuous improvement efforts are driven by the school’s mission and purpose. Instructional strategies, student assessment, and teacher professional learning maintain a focus upon school improvement goals noted in the School Accountability Plan.

Professional learning opportunities are provided by the district throughout the school year. Teachers are encouraged by the administration to participate in these events. On a school level, there is not a cohesive professional development plan in place at this time. Teachers do have high expectations of students, differentiate instruction and conduct authentic assessments. Each department has a copy of the School Accountability Plan and bases its learning goals on this document.

End of Course Test results and Graduation Test results are shared with departments and posted in the Data Room. The Board of Education makes an Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) report based on testing information. This information is communicated to stakeholders via the website and press releases. Island’s High School website, Facebook, and standard mail outs are also used to celebrate successes and inform stakeholders.

School personnel stated in interviews that information gained from regularly evaluating the school’s improvement plan is used to drive decisions regarding student learning. During pre-planning, the faculty reviews the goals and shares strategies to teach content and improve test scores. Targeted Tuesdays and Instructional Thursdays are held throughout the year to facilitate data review and instructional planning.

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

- Real-time communication through a variety of mediums (Shark Bytes, Facebook, Twitter, ihscurrent.com, paper newsletter, etc.) with stakeholders is exceptional. As a result, stakeholders stay very well informed of the school’s performance and current events.
- Islands High School has shown a commitment to continuous improvement. As a new school, the faculty and administration recognize the availability of limited longitudinal data to review to establish trend, and understand that they must be vigilant in working towards the use of data to drive instruction to promote continuous improvement.

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

- Develop and implement a yearly, cohesive, and focused professional learning plan regarding the use of data in planning and remediation to promote further growth for teachers and improvement of student achievement.
- Solicit greater input from external stakeholders in regard to the school improvement process so that multiple voices can be heard.
Finding: Islands 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

- Mr. Harley Grove, Chair/Lead Evaluator (Liberty County Schools)
- Mrs. Mary Anne Hogan, Team Member (Saint Vincent's Academy)
- Mrs. Helen L. Herndon, Team Member (Richmond Hill High School)
- Dr. Reggie Burgess, Team Member (Arthur Williams Middle School)

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.