Report of the
Quality Assurance Review Team
for
The School of Liberal Studies
400 Pennsylvania Ave
Savannah, Georgia, United States 31404-1240

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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.
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.
Summary of Findings

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

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 3 members of the administrative team, 32 students, 12 parents, and 16 teachers. In addition, community 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:

The teaching staff has access to a Data Room with all the appropriate data so that teachers may meet by departments and subject areas to collaborate and plan instructional strategies.

Evidence:

Through interviews, the QAR members noted that the school leaders recognize the importance of using data to drive curriculum and planning decisions; because all data are posted, the Data room serves as an appropriate meeting area. Teachers, too, have been encouraged by some of the readily available, visible results they have
seen through this collaboration process and in making modifications to their instruction.

Rationale:
Posting results of various tests in the Data room as well as in visible areas, faculty has the picture of the changes needed for teaching and providing effective strategies. Focus is further directed toward improving Title I goals and the goals of the Accountability Plan and making increased gains toward making AYP.

Commendation 2

Commendation Statement:
Teachers use multiple programs to determine remediation and enrichment opportunities for students.

Evidence:
In order to address enrichment and remediation possibilities, a variety of programs is being used extensively within the school and in the after-school program. Several of these programs include Homework Cafe, RTI, (Response to Intervention) 21st Century, GEAR-UP, and Step-Up Savannah. During interviews, stakeholders indicated that by supplementing instruction and learning, a difference is being made in students' performance and achievement.

Rationale:
Through the use of available school programs, teachers can gauge how ell students are performing and make modifications as necessary.

Commendation 3

Commendation Statement:
A family-like atmosphere permeates classes, extra-curricular activities, and the entire school program.

Evidence:
All stakeholders stated that the school has been changed into a different setting.. Included in their compliments were "the family-like atmosphere" recognized in all school employees.

Rationale:
A family-style atmosphere indicates to students that school personnel have their best interest at heart..

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:
Develop Belief Statements with input from all stakeholders.

Evidence:
Interviews validated that stakeholders had little input in developing the mission and vision statements. Many of them could summarize what the statements meant to them; however, they were more fully aware of the school's motto: We Believe.

Rationale:
Because the school is unable to change the district's vision and mission for the school, the stakeholders could develop Belief Statements (using and further developing the motto: We Believe) that would be distinguishable for SHSLS.

Required Action 2

Required Action:
Create the necessary modifications to complete the newly developed teacher website.

Evidence:
Although it is evident that the teacher website affords much communication to parents and students, it lacks consistency in the format.

Rationale:
In order that parents have little or no difficulty in reading and understanding the teacher website, the format must be simple and easy to understand. A Value Statement or Value Promise as well as a designed announcement section and other areas must be similarly formatted to keep parents aware of school happenings.

Required Action 3

Required Action:
Incorporate a variety of teaching styles for to better meet students' needs.

Evidence:
During interviews, students identified ways that they would reap more benefits from many of their classes. They inferred that PowerPoints and repeated standard lectures have become too monotonous. Students further indicated that they would like to see more hands-on type lessons and other ways to accommodate all types of learning styles.

Rationale:
Because there are so many different types of learners and because the leaders and teachers are striving to make AYP, teachers making a few modifications in their instructional methods/styles not only would benefit the students, but it could also be an improvement in student achievement.

Required Action 4

Required Action:
Utilize diagnostic assessment data more to monitor and adjust instruction.
Evidence:
Data are used by some teachers without enough knowledge of interpretation, and the utilization is not pervasive. During department and collaborative team meetings, the school must be certain that all teachers are systematically analyzing assessment data and examining student work on a consistent basis.

Rationale:
Data drives instruction; moreover, the results of using data effectively, with the assistance of the experts in data analysis, can maximize student achievement. These same results can ensure continuous improvement for individual learners and address achievement gaps among the 770 student population.

**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](http://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 The School of Liberal Studies 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:

By means of surveys and a consensus-building process, the faculty and several stakeholders of Savannah High School of Liberal Studies (SHSLS) met in order to redefine the district-wide mission and vision statements so that they may be tailored to the needs of the school population. All participants worked to identify and incorporate 21st Century skills to expand means for students to become global leaders. As students need skills for today, but more especially for the future, the mission/vision, collaboration, and School Improvement Plan will guide the teaching and learning process as they translate the shared vision into goals that lead to subject matter expectations and performance. Not only are the mission and vision made public, but they are also being used as a commitment to building consensus regarding SHSLS. Although as a school, SHSLS has not revisited this district’s mission and vision, there was no evidence of, knowledge of, reference to, or regard for any belief statements that could further develop this positive school’s Motto: “We Believe…”

The mission is displayed in each classroom and on almost all school correspondence. Student work, bulletin boards, posters, school website, and other technological advances help to reinforce the values and goals of the school. Interviews with a myriad of stakeholders showed a commitment to the school’s vision and mission. However, there did not seem to be any current key persons who had input in the formulation of the mission. The mission has been relayed through school community meetings, Open-House, PTSA, and School Council meetings. Using the school’s profile, stakeholders were able to recognize and address which parts of the visions for organizational effectiveness and student achievement were being observed and the ones that still needed more attention.

The Quality Assurance Review (QAR) team noted that departmental level meetings, community or course-content meetings, Data Team meetings, leadership meetings, and faculty meetings are conducted regularly to ensure that the school’s purpose, vision, and goals guide the learning and teaching process. From the student profile and achievement, the School Improvement Plan (SIP) lists and identifies goals and strategies for school improvement and student performance. Because of their easy access to student data and their determination to improve performance and achievement, teachers hold high expectations of their students. By creating a list of belief statements, the stakeholders may understand that the belief statements can demonstrate a commitment to the vision and bridge to excellence in the mission which creates and improves an environment in which every student has the opportunity to reach his or her maximum potential.
Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:

- SSLS uses bulletin boards to promote its goals and to make sure the school mission is reinforced.
- Through the interviews, the QART members realized that the stakeholders believe the school is building bridges for the students as they are working to develop 21st Century thinkers to become global leaders.
- Teachers serve as advisors and mentors for each student. Students are beginning to realize that others are concerned and do care about them.
- Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS) reinforce good behavior for many students who may not be recognized.

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

- Address and resolve the concern that 70% of teachers surveyed who feel that the school has an ineffective instructional program.
- Devise other means of communication to parents who have no computer or technology connection in their homes.
- Provide basic computer classes for parents during each semester.

Finding: The School of Liberal Studies 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:

Following all policies, rules, and regulations set forth by the Federal Government, Georgia Department of Education, and the Savannah-Chatham County Board of Education, the administrators and staff have executed each one that was pertinent to the school. Student and faculty/staff handbooks cover policies and procedures that inform all stakeholders about guidelines and most regulations of both the school and district.

During the team’s visit, the group collected several pieces of evidence through observations, artifacts, and interviews that directly related to and complemented the School Assessment Report (SAR). The leadership team as well as the faculty and staff has an integral role in helping to establish and communicate policies and procedures to make for a more effective school setting. Although some faculty need more in-depth training on interpreting data, it was evident and noted that data now drives instruction and student learning. Because of the school profile and trends in data, the leadership team and Data Teams realize the importance of disaggregating data to show what may be causing students’ limitations and/or challenges in attaining higher and better results on all the specific tests.

Having charts of data on display, teachers should benefit from the common planning time and the designated data room where their meetings are held. Focus walks and teacher observations indicate that several professional development programs were warranted as part of the assessment to attack the areas of
weakness. Furthermore, attendance data, academic data, and discipline data are also used to evaluate student performance. By attending to the test statistics, SHSLS realizes that progress is being made toward professional growth, innovation, and increased student performance. As the dedicated principal, in addition to the two supportive assistants, understands that working together as a united force for SHSLS students, a strong family atmosphere in the school has been realized for the benefit of students. Listening to the plethora of interviewees’ remarks, the team feels that the family atmosphere is becoming infectious.

Instead of the usual dated departments as in most high schools, the school leaders and School Improvement Team might consider using the term “community,” which is more in trend with Professional Learning Communities (PLC). The equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation should be further addressed in order to be systematic throughout the school so that the results will not be so varied.

In order to improve the safety and order of the school, all stakeholders seem to have a voice and play an integral role; that would also include students who wear the large “NO BULLYING” pins. Realizing the concerns about safety, the administrative team has a written Crisis Management Plan that has been approved and communicated to the entire faculty; however, other stakeholders need to be aware of information that relates directly to them.

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

- Artifacts are put into practice and used in personnel evaluation.
- The leadership team, data team, School Improvement Team, and others meet weekly or bi-weekly and use their time to discuss and suggest ideas to make sure all teachers stay current on curriculum and data in order to continue various means toward improvement and progress.
- Commitment is a buzzword for the all stakeholder groups.

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

- Respond verbally or in writing to stakeholders’ questions, concerns, and issues that are most important and that merit consideration.
- Designated a staff member whose responsibility is to evaluate all classified staff.
- Prepare an agenda of professional development workshops and require teachers to participate in these courses.
- Disaggregate and disseminate student and school data to all involved staff and conduct follow-ups regularly to improve student performance and achievement.

Finding: The School of Liberal Studies 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 and its leaders have engaged in practices directly related to the clear communication of desired results for student learning. For stakeholders, standards are regularly displayed in classrooms and EOCT results are published in halls and in the planning rooms for faculty. Curriculum is articulated in guides and maps. Moreover, published handbooks express stakeholder expectations for student behavior. The school and its leaders support planning times for faculty to meet on curricular and other school issues.

There is evidence that the school employs formative assessments to improve student learning, though assessments are not uniformly developed in all departments. During interviews, faculty members expressed familiarity with formative assessments. Furthermore, school leaders (not just the administration) were familiar with the special tracking abilities of the OAS (Online Assessment System) technology to communicate student progress towards summative goals. The most significant indicator of the use of reflective formative assessments were interviews with students that revealed high levels of metacognition (students talked about self-identifying as visual, kinetic, or tactile learners).

There is strong evidence that school leaders and faculty use data to inform decisions about curriculum and assessment. A data room is in use for faculty to track various information about individual students and cohorts. A Design Team reviews progress towards Georgia Performance standards. EOCT results are published clearly throughout the school.

The inability of the school to achieve AYP and other important benchmarks was noted by the QAR team. More important than these numbers; however, was the commitment of the school leaders and faculty to establish formal methods to address students who had difficulty mastering objectives. A variety of after-school organizations exists such as 21st century to help lower achieving students. Faculty members were deeply committed to improving student learning by participating in programs and giving of their time after school.

There is a solid attempt to create multiple opportunities to integrate technology into the curriculum.

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

- The school utilizes technology and data to align curriculum to state standards.
- School leaders and faculty recognize the challenges inherent in the school population and seek to create formal ways to help students who are struggling with mastery.

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

- Build upon existing structures to include more authentic assessment, thereby emphasizing to students the practical value of curriculum and assessment.
- Create professional development opportunities for less technologically skilled faculty to increase the use web sites and “Internet 2.0” for assessment and communication with students and families.
- Establish best instructional practices to build higher order thinking math skills.
Finding: The School of Liberal Studies 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 designs assessments that measure student comprehension and that are aligned with the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS). Assessment instruments are collaboratively designed by department team members. Department team members regularly meet to discuss student performance on common documents and exchange information about effective teaching strategies.

Data from benchmark tests should be compiled in a database that is accessible by the teachers. This data can further be analyzed to identify strengths and weaknesses of individual students. As there is a plan already in operation, students in need may be helped through the multiple tutorials that are now available. It is vital that the interdisciplinary teams use data to develop instructional modifications. Overall performance goals must be set and posted around the school to motivate teachers and students to meet the new objectives. If each student had a copy of his own test results to keep in his or her possession, the student will take a more vested interest in his or her own performance and achievement.

All test results should be given to students and parents and / or posted to the district’s online information system. Students, parents, teachers and administrators can easily view those data. For those parents without computer internet access, SHSLS will have to provide hard copies of online information (grades, missing assignments, test scores, tardies, suspensions, and attendance) every 4.5 weeks to have a more effective program and to inform all stakeholders.

In an effort to disaggregate testing data effectively, teachers should devise a program by using a resource as the First District RESA to make it easier to analyze testing data for faculty, students, and parents.

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

- All teachers are planning lessons to meet state-approved performance standards. Those standards are measured by the End-of-Course Tests and by the Georgia High School Graduation Tests. Standards also emphasize academic rigor and include higher order thinking skills.

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

- Reevaluate the school's efforts to determine if there is too much focus on the test-taking process and the added emphasis of teaching students test-taking strategies.
- Utilize regular benchmark, using the results to modify instruction and to identify students who need remediation.
- Provide each student with a copy of his/her test results and desired goals so that he or she may keep them in their notebooks and review them often.
Finding: The School of Liberal Studies 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 school has only 92% of its teachers fully certified in the area they teach and more than half of the teachers have earned an advanced degree. Presently, the school is in the process of developing a program to recruit and retain Highly Qualified teachers in all areas. New staff members participate in a district led orientation program; no formal in-house mentoring program exists. School leaders are in the process of realigning human resources to meet the school’s educational goals. As teachers are involved in Professional Learning Communities that meet regularly, there are weekly data team meetings to discuss students’ weaknesses and strengths and to discuss effective teaching strategies.

The school has random audits and adheres to district policies and guidelines. Since school leaders have the responsibility for compliance with any use of Title I funds, the school is in the process of developing an internal accounting and budgeting system. Data from the school improvement plan drive usage of space and changes occur to meet the plan’s priorities. Human resources need realigning to achieve the school’s vision and mission. The school has a Crisis Management Plan with information found in the student handbook; however, parents do not have access to the Emergency Response Plans nor are safety procedures found in the student handbook.

Although the school has a disproportionate amount of students with special needs, stakeholder surveys show a satisfaction with access to and quality of social and support services through the school and its partners. Students who have been identified with special needs are served with a team to develop customized plans for addressing their needs. Interventions are based on modern learning research that is differentiated and documented through systemic record keeping.

A strong focus on postsecondary plans for students is a priority, as evidenced by a small student-teacher advisor ratio, community partnership, and guidance services that assist students in the on-line application process and other career opportunities. There are two counselors for 770 students; in addition, all students do meet monthly with their advisors to assess progress toward graduation and to review other skills. All seniors are required to apply to at least three colleges during the fall semester.

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

- The quality of and access to support services both in the school and through partnerships is varied and provides satisfaction to all stakeholders, as indicated by surveys.
- The school has a process to identify students in need of additional intervention. Individual plans of teacher-led intervention are monitored by school leaders via systemic record keeping and reviews of data.
- Professional Learning Communities meet regularly.
- Scheduling allows for common planning times.
Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

- Develop a partnership with local colleges to aid in recruiting Highly Qualified teachers. This partnership could include having college students mentor and/or tutor students.
- Implement a formal in-house mentoring program for new teachers and a social committee to retain those teachers. Students need the stability of experienced staff.
- Revise the student handbook to include the Emergency Response Plan and other safety procedures. This information should also be on the school’s website.
- Structure an internal accounting and budgeting system and be consistent in its use. All funds should be used in accordance with mandates, rules, and regulations.
- Establish a code of conduct for the school that would create a safer and more orderly learning environment.

Finding: The School of Liberal Studies 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:

Though the school has a process to communicate with and receive information from stakeholders, according to the Self Assessment, “while parents are tolerated, they are not encouraged to be an integral part of the school.” The Self Assessment also had a statement that “students do not feel they have any impact on what happens in the school.”

The school has established partnerships with stakeholder groups, including local colleges, businesses, and non-profit and governmental agencies.

Parents of lower achieving students have access to resources that can help them at home and a written parent compact is in place. The school has active sports and band booster clubs, but it lacks the support from parents with academics.

Though both parents and students receive bi-weekly progress reports and parents can also access the school’s website to review grades, dissemination of information is inconsistent. Moreover, it appears that the school’s call-out system frequently lacks current parent phone numbers. Additionally, few teachers utilize the school’s website to post assignments and upcoming classroom activities.

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

- The school has established partnerships with local colleges such as Savannah State, Armstrong State, Savannah Tech, and other businesses and organizations.
- Parents have unlimited access to student grades via the Parent Access website and receive bi-weekly progress reports.
Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:

- Institute a system of special privileges for good behavior, good grades, punctuality, and attendance to improve student relationships. Request student input for privileges to make them feel an integral part of the school.
- Establish a Parental Involvement Committee to increase parent participation that is representative of all students.
- Encourage all teachers to utilize the school’s website for posting assignments and other classroom information.
- Develop a system to communicate more effectively with parents who lack internet services and who have not provided current phone numbers.

Finding: The School of Liberal Studies 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 school created and has implemented a Title I Accountability Plan. The plan details several measurable and attainable goals for students. Moreover, the goals are not limited to state assessments, but also include measures related to safety, improved graduation rates, and the creation of a global world view. This is critical for a student body that has a 77% poverty rate.

The Accountability Plan is an articulated document. The QAR team noted a spirit of continuous improvement in its interviews with all stakeholders.

The QAR team found that the school has not communicated its goals for improvement nor its documented improvements themselves to all stakeholders. For instance, a group of involved parents interviewed was anecdotally aware that incidents requiring the intervention of school resource officers had been developed, but they did not know the data points associated with safety. Additionally noted was that all stakeholders desire inclusion in the process of improvement, but these groups will need a more stable stream of information about school improvement.

Faculty members report many opportunities for professional development; specifically, faculty called for development specific to the use of technology (notably faculty web sites to communicate with parents and students).

The Team found that school leaders are intently aware of the need for greater parent involvement in improving the school. Recent incentive programs involving student/parent attendance at PTSA offered substantial opportunities for growth.

Strengths - The team noted the following successful practices deserving of recognition:
- The Accountability Plan is well organized and includes measurable, achievable goals.
- School leaders recognize the importance of Professional Development (PD) in school improvement and have established regular, structured sessions during the year.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for consideration by the school:
- Design a program by semesters to celebrate academic and attendance accomplishments of the students. As the school reaches benchmarks and notes clear goals, school leaders should both celebrate the accomplishments and communicate the details of the school improvement to all stakeholders.
- Develop Belief Statements that can act as specific principles upon which improvement is built.

Finding: The School of Liberal Studies 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. Milton Bentley, Chair/Lead Evaluator
- Mr. James R. Brown, Team Member (Benedictine Military School)
- Mrs. Jan C. Payne, Team Member (Frederica Academy)

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.