

**Report of the
Quality Assurance Review Team
for
Tuscumbia City Board of Education**

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North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA) are accreditation divisions of AdvancED.

Quality Assurance Review Report

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About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

Background. Founded in 1895, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and 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, school districts and their schools must:

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

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

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

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

Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), a division of AdvancED, visited Tuscumbia City Board of Education on 10/25/2009 - 10/28/2009.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 11 administrators, 67 teachers, 3 support staff, 45 parents and business partners, 34 students, and 5 Board of Education members for a total of 165 stakeholders. In addition to meeting with district personnel and stakeholders, the team visited 4 schools within the school district. During the school visits, team members interviewed school stakeholders, observed classrooms, and reviewed relevant school artifacts. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the district. Specifically, the team examined the district's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

- Vision and Purpose
- Governance and Leadership
- Teaching and Learning
- Documenting and Using Results
- Resource and Support Systems
- Stakeholder Communications and Relationships
- Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

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

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

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

Commendations

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

- **The leadership of the Tuscumbia City Schools' superintendent in providing an open door policy to all stakeholders, being visible in schools, attending extracurricular events, and facilitating system leadership team meetings.**

Interviews indicate all stakeholders feel the system leadership is accessible and demonstrates a willingness to communicate.

The accessibility of the system leadership provides the opportunity for a collaborative process to promote progress for student achievement.

- **The successful progress of the Tuscumbia district and schools on state and national assessments.**

Artifacts and interviews provide evidence of significant increases on state mandated assessments and ACT scores.

This accomplishment reveals the work and commitment of the system to excellence.

- **The Tuscumbia City School Board's appropriation of stimulus funds to provide a parent coordinator position.**

Stakeholder interviews indicate the parent coordinator has substantially increased parent involvement.

The use of stimulus funds to provide a parent coordinator is evidence of the system's commitment to improving stakeholder communication and relationships. Research indicates that parental involvement increases student achievement.

- **The commitment of the Tuscumbia City School's professional staff to collegiality and to all students' total success and well being.**

Through stakeholder interviews and school visits, evidence indicates that central office staff, local school administration, faculty, and staff are dedicated to increasing student performance.

Highly qualified and committed personnel contribute to the increase of student achievement and success. The commitment of the professional staff in improving student achievement and success has resulted in improved state and national assessment scores.

- **A high degree of involvement and support from parents and community leaders of Tuscumbia City Schools.**

Artifacts indicate stakeholder support through such avenues as the Tuscumbia City Council, the Tuscumbia

City Schools Foundation, various school academic programs, volunteer organizations, booster clubs, and extracurricular events.

When educators, parents and community members work together students succeed.

Recommendations

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

- **Develop a plan and process to ensure that the board and all stakeholders understand the AdvancED standards and how they impact the school system.**

Interviews revealed only a few stakeholders could identify the seven standards and how they impact the system. Interviews indicated there was not a clear understanding among stakeholders as to how the accreditation process was conducted.

Communication and understanding increases the success rate of any program or process.

- **With the input of all stakeholder groups, create and implement an ethics board policy that addresses the expectations of board member conduct and the consequences for violation of said policy.**

Evidence from stakeholder interviews, including board members, indicated that one or more board members are using their positions to advance personal agendas. Staff expressed fear for their jobs and relayed specific examples of individual board members directing staff and conducting staff meetings.

School staff and parents must have a clear line of authority (chain of command) that is followed consistently.

- **Develop and implement a detailed and comprehensive plan for training the board members in their specific roles and responsibilities and how to work as a team with the leadership of the school system.**

The team found tremendous support for the school system. However, there was clear evidence to support that one or more members of the board are involved in micro-managing the system, thus creating unrest, frustration, and concern among staff, parents, and the community.

The board and administrative leadership must work in harmony as they set policy and direction for the system. Working outside of their prescribed roles leads to low morale for the staff and impacts the performance of students.

- **Design a comprehensive plan to recruit minorities as teachers and administrators.**

Board members, administrators, staff and parents shared concerns about the difficulty in recruiting minority

educators into the Tuscumbia City Schools. A review of personnel data supported this concern.

Staff demographics should be a reflection of the student population, thus providing role models for all students in the educational environment.

- **Include all stakeholders in the development of a plan to review and update the vision of the school system and address the concern of "tradition" versus "change."**

Interviews with all stakeholders revealed the present vision is approximately ten years old and has not been reviewed by a representation of all stakeholder groups. Evidence further indicated that the vision does not drive the expenditure of funds, human resources, policies, or program decisions.

A clear vision developed by all stakeholder groups provides direction and guidance to the school board and administration in the implementation of programs and the priority of financial expenditures.

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

Next Steps

The school district should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all stakeholders.
2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the commendations section to maximize their impact on the school district.
3. Develop action plans to address the recommendations made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the recommendations.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the school district's efforts to improve student performance and district effectiveness.
5. Following the Quality Assurance Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the team's recommendations. The report will be reviewed at the state and national level to ensure that significant progress is being made toward the recommendations. Lack of progress can result in a change in accreditation status.
6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

Resources

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

Celebrating Accreditation

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

can be ordered from the website to help you share your accomplishment with your community.

Summary

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

Standards for Accreditation

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

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

Standard 1. Vision & Purpose

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

Description:

The Quality Assurance Review (QAR) Team finds the Tuscumbia City School System is in the initial stages of developing a shared purpose and vision for all stakeholders. Through interviews with the superintendent, central office staff, school board, and community members, the QAR team confirmed that the current mission and vision statements have not been revised by a collaborative group in approximately ten years. Additionally, there was no evidence to support the foundation for the allocation of resources. It was noted in several stakeholder interviews the importance of "tradition" in the community. These same stakeholders expressed that while "tradition" was an important value to the community it should not impair the system's ability to implement "change."

There is evidence the superintendent and district staff meet regularly with local school leaders to discuss data and develop goals. However, the evidence does not support that established goals are clearly communicated to stakeholders nor are they intentionally tied to the current mission and vision of the system. The QAR team does find the system conducts an annual needs assessment to determine the staff development priorities of its certified staff and that there is limited effort to coordinate these priorities with the goals.

Based on examples supplied to the QAR team, the system maintains and uses assessment information supplied by the Alabama State Department of Education. This information is analyzed at the district level and with local school administrators. Local school data meetings are held to share this information with teachers who develop action plans to address deficiencies through the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP). Teacher interviews support their ability to articulate trend data for their respective schools. Additionally the QAR team found stakeholders were knowledgeable of the process for the dissemination of data and felt it was sufficient to meet their needs.

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

- The system maintains and uses assessment information to direct curriculum and instruction.
- The superintendent and staff meet with school administrators to discuss data and develop goals.

Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement - The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Develop a systematic plan, involving all stakeholders, to update and implement the vision and mission for Tuscumbia City Schools.
- Collaborate with stakeholders to develop a strategic improvement plan to address identified areas of improvement while embracing desired traditions.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Emerging", indicating that the Tuscumbia City Board of Education has not met the accreditation requirements for the "Vision & Purpose" standard.

Standard 2. Governance & Leadership

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

Description:

The Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed individuals representing all stakeholder groups in the Tuscumbia City Schools. The interviews revealed tremendous support for the administrative leadership at the school and system level. The "open door" policy of the superintendent and his presence throughout the system and community allows the parents, staff, students, and community easy access to share their thoughts and concerns. Parents, community members and students voiced their support for their principals as to the quality of their work and their dedication to the students of all schools in the system. It was stated over and over that the superintendent announcing "ALL" school accomplishments at sporting events was a great step forward in recognizing the accomplishments of all students. Leadership team meetings with school and system administrators are held multiple times monthly to discuss and set directions for the schools. The availability of nurses at all schools and the system office is seen as an asset by both the staff and parents.

Interviews with all stakeholders revealed that the behavior of one or more members of the Tuscumbia City School Board has created an environment of fear, confusion, and frustration throughout the school system and community. Evidence support that board members have individually reviewed applications of additional applicants other than those recommended for positions by the administrative staff. Board members stated they conduct unannounced visits to the schools to check out the facilities and grounds rather than referring those duties to the administration. Members of the board stated they have been working on ethics policies for staff and the use of technology equipment, yet the board does not have an ethics policy that governs their own actions. Interviews of all stakeholders revealed widespread concern that individual board members and the board at large are appropriating personnel and resources in conflict with their own vision statement. It was felt that a major portion of the boards' time was spent on sports and whether or not the grass was cut versus the academic success of students. Statements were made that the "board praised winning sports teams and ignored winning academics." Stakeholders stated that teaching positions were changed and employees were terminated to make room for coaches to the detriment of other programs. Stakeholder interviews revealed many stakeholders feel "tradition" is

important in any organization just as it is in a school system. However, "change" must be a welcome component in any successful school system in order to provide for the growing needs of a changing environment, population and community. Individual board members stated that some of their members are involved in micro-managing the school system. Stakeholders stated the board was "eliminating programs and positions to save Friday night football" and that the board lacks the respect for staff and parents. Board members were involved in directing the food service department as to how to plan meals and spend funds, thus causing frustration and undo stress in the department. The board directed the high school teachers eat in the dining room with students even though adequate supervision was present. Stakeholders expressed that the board has "tunnel vision" in making decisions and need to put aside their "petty differences" and work as team with the superintendent to move the system forward. In other words, they need to focus on the big picture and allow the administration to do their job.

The school system provides adequate insurance and proper legal services. Although some training has been provided to some board members, there is a lack of comprehensive board member training in their role and responsibilities.

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

- Shared leadership is provided throughout the system.
- A safe environment for students is provided.
- Dedicated administrators serve the school community.
- The superintendent provides strong leadership.

Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement - The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Extensive training in generally accepted boardmanship practices for all board members must be provided.
- Board members need to participate in comprehensive training in their roles and responsibilities.
- Individual board members need to refrain from micromanaging staff and programs.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Emerging", indicating that the Tuscumbia City Board of Education has not met the accreditation requirements for the "Governance & Leadership" standard.

Standard 3. Teaching & Learning

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

Description:

The Quality Assurance Review Team finds, based upon interviews with parents and community members, that Tuscumbia City Schools has a highly qualified, professional, and dedicated staff. The educational staff is committed to challenging each student while meeting the needs of all students. Upon interviewing teachers, it was determined that student performance is monitored to ensure readiness for the next level. Teachers are knowledgeable of best practices and take advantage of professional development opportunities. They are willing to collaborate and do what is in the best interest of children. Teachers stated they have the support of the central office in trying new instructional methods and are appreciative

of the instructional programs and technology to which they have access.

Based upon interview data and artifacts, the Quality Assurance Review Team finds Tuscumbia City Schools provides a research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students. The system is data-driven, based upon interviews with teachers, leadership teams, and system personnel. Review of artifacts indicated that data from various tests are used to determine areas of need and as a basis for developing both system and school improvement plans. School and system level leaders use the data to determine remediation efforts and to make modifications in instructional practices. Both system and school leaders and teachers recognize that there has been a stronger focus on reading than on math in the intermediate grades, and a greater focus is now being placed on math. Data meetings are held weekly to analyze data and make instructional decisions in the intermediate grades. The Compass Learning program has been implemented as one method to make instruction data driven while also utilizing technology and making learning engaging for students.

During teacher interviews, it was obvious that all teachers were familiar with the Alabama Course of Study for their grade level or subject area. Teachers meet both horizontally and vertically to ensure that material is being taught at the appropriate grade level and not being unnecessarily repeated at any grade level. No evidence of pacing guides was found.

Based upon observation and interviews, technology is readily available in all classrooms for the purpose of enhancing instruction. This technology is viewed as a source of pride by stakeholders. Training has been provided in using SmartBoards, the Internet, and other technology and additional training remains available. A full-time instructional technology coordinator is employed by the system to assist teachers in the full implementation of technology as a tool for instruction. Media specialists in each school are available to assist with technology needs.

Interview data revealed that Tuscumbia City Schools strive to provide an educational environment in which all students may achieve their full academic and leadership potential. An example of this is the Endangered Species Program at the high school. This program is a step-by-step plan designed to track students and inform parents on student performance, grades, and attendance. The PAWS and BUILDERS clubs in the intermediate and middle schools provide leadership opportunities for students. It was evident that all stakeholders are focused on working together to assist students in achieving excellence.

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

- The district and schools make effective utilization of data for academic improvement.
- Implementation of the Endangered Species Plan serves as an intervention to inform parents of student progress.
- Staff involvement with students inside and outside the school setting demonstrates the staff's commitment to the welfare of the total child.

Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement - The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Develop pacing guides in the core curricular areas.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional", indicating that the Tuscumbia City Board of Education has met the accreditation requirements for the "Teaching & Learning" standard.

Standard 4. Documenting & Using Results

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

Description:

The Quality Assurance Review Team finds the district establishes and implements a comprehensive assessment system and ensures student data is used in decision making. Through a systematic process, the central office collects and disseminates data on the Stanford Achievement Test 10, the Alabama Reading and Math Test, DIBELS, the Alabama High School Graduation Exam, and college ACT scores. The data yields timely and accurate information for the school leadership. Interviews and artifacts indicated that the faculty, school leadership, and district leadership hold meetings to review strengths and weaknesses, make curriculum adjustments, and choose research-based programs such as Compass Learning and Scott Foresman Reading that produce verifiable growth in student performance.

Trend data and longitudinal data are collected by grade level, subgroup, and student. No evidence of comparative data at the state and national levels was documented.

Surveys and interviews indicated that the professional staff has opportunities to choose professional development activities. Many of the activities assist faculty in achieving improvement goals; however, no evidence was found that a plan exists to align professional development with school improvement initiatives.

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

- Data-driven decisions guide teaching and learning throughout the district.
- District and school leadership participate in regular data discussions regarding student assessment and performance.

Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement - The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Assemble comparison data for similar school systems.
- Provide a plan to align professional development with school improvement goals.

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

Standard 5. Resource & Support Systems

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

Description:

The Quality Assurance Review Team finds, based on stakeholder interviews, that Tuscumbia City Schools has established a system that has met the concerns of having a safe and orderly learning environment. The Quality Assurance Review Team interviews reveal that school leaders are making great strides in maintaining facilities and equipment to ensure this process is ongoing and budget allocations are made for maintenance and facility development. The team finds evidence from the Five Year Capital Outlay Plan that Tuscumbia City Schools complies with the updating of facilities.

Resources are limited from state and local governments, but Tuscumbia City Schools are able to provide valuable programs using local and federal funds. The system has employed a parent coordinator with federal stimulus funds. Licensed practical nurses are employed in each school, with a registered nurse at the central office. The system has in place the Compass Learning program to facilitate success with state assessments. Through interviews, it was found that a strong tutoring program is in place in the school system and community, and an emphasis has been placed on motivating students to participate in taking and being successful on the ACT to help facilitate college entrance and the ability to earn scholarships.

As revealed through interviews and artifacts, the Quality Assurance Review Team finds the school system has a crisis management plan. A call alert system (SchoolCast) has been implemented to notify stakeholders of special conditions. As noted through interviews, the school system has improved the availability of technology in the system.

The Quality Assurance Review Team finds through interviewing of all stakeholders the importance of a plan to be developed to encourage minority students in the system to explore opportunities in the field of education and a plan for recruiting and retaining minority teachers.

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

- A nurse serves each school.
- A parent coordinator has improved parent engagement in the schools.
- ACT scores have improved.
- Compass Learning has been put into place.
- A safe and orderly environment for teaching and learning has been provided.
- There is district coordination with the city council on a five-year capital outlay plan.
- A crisis management plan has been developed.

Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement - The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Develop a plan to encourage minority students to explore opportunities in education.
- Develop a plan to recruit and retain minority teachers.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall

assessment level of "Operational", indicating that the Tuscumbia City Board of Education has met the accreditation requirements for the "Resource & Support Systems" standard.

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications & Relationships

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

Description:

The Quality Assurance Review Team finds Tuscumbia City Schools adequately meet the intent of this standard through evidence found in stakeholder interviews of involvement of community members and parents in a wide variety of programs and events. These include but are not limited to parent volunteer organizations, booster clubs, Grandparents' Day, career days, and Coffee with the Principal. Support for the school system is evident through the involvement of parents and community members during school events and in the pride expressed by all stakeholders. At the high school level, many parents and community members are involved in tutoring students beyond school hours in order to assist students in achieving academic success. These community members include central office staff, school board members, city government officials, as well as many others.

Local community members and parents expressed a sense of pride in having their children and grandchildren a part of the Tuscumbia City Schools. Stakeholders acknowledged and praised the efforts of the Tuscumbia City School's administrators and educators as they create an environment that supports and demonstrates caring relationships among staff, students, parents, business, and community stakeholders. Stakeholders are involved in the initiatives of the school system in assuring the academic and personal success of the students of the school system. The use of stimulus money for a parent coordinator at the primary school is an efficient use of funding.

Stakeholder interviews indicated the superintendent is visible and accessible to parents and community members. This "open door" policy allows for open communication within the educational setting. His presence in the schools encourages students and teachers and makes them feel the work they do is valued. His presence allows both students and teachers to share ideas and to express concerns. Additionally, the superintendent takes time during high school sports events to recognize the success of students.

The parents and community of Tuscumbia City Schools are kept informed via the system and individual school websites, school newsletters, STIHome, e-mails, SchoolCast, and the local newspaper. While most stakeholders stated communication is a strength of the system, no data exists to support the number of parents who have access to the technology needed to communicate via STIHome, e-mail, or school websites.

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

- The district maintains an effective tutoring program for students that involves both internal and external stakeholders.
- The superintendent is actively engaged and visible in the community.

Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement - The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Develop a comprehensive plan that fosters an increase in incoming and outgoing intentional communication with all stakeholders.

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

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

Description:

The Quality Assurance Review Team finds the school district is successful in establishing, implementing, and monitoring a continuous process for student improvement. The interviews and artifacts indicated that Tuscumbia City Schools maintains a rich profile, has developed a plan to measure goals and interventions, and has procedures in place to monitor results and guide future improvement efforts. Evidence indicated that a vision has been established. However, evidence also revealed that the vision is not reviewed on a regular basis. In addition, interviews indicated that board members, parents, and community members are not aware of AdvancED standards.

A number of programs such as Compass Learning, Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI), Scott Foresman Reading, Response to Intervention, and Access Distance Learning indicate that the school district is focusing on reaching most student population groups. Building Based Student Support Teams (BBSST), data meetings at district and school levels, and tutoring focus on closing gaps between current and expected performance levels. Evidence such as increased graduation rates and progress in increasing high school ACT scores indicates the system uses longitudinal data to adjust curriculum.

The system strives to provide research-based professional development to aid student personnel in achieving improvement goals. Interviews and documents revealed a strong commitment to professional development. Professional development is based on the enhancement of student achievement goals. Needs assessment surveys provide information used to direct professional development. Evidence indicated however, that the professional development is not aligned with stated goals.

Even though stakeholders engage in a process of continuous improvement, evidence states the "traditions" of the district inhibits "change."

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

- Progress has been achieved on state and national assessments.
- The system has developed a plan to measure goals and interventions.

Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement - The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Engage in formal examination and annual review of the district vision.
- Develop a professional development plan that aligns with stated goals.
- Devise a plan to review AdvancED standards on a regular basis.

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

Quality Assurance Findings

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

Description

The Quality Assurance Review Team finds that Tuscumbia City Schools has developed system and school level improvement plans.

Strengths

- The team found that the system had in place an effective technology support system to collect and disaggregate data for the use of improving instruction and monitoring the compliance with standards.

Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement

- The review team found, through a review of artifacts and interviews, that a need exists for a more comprehensive involvement of all stakeholders in the quality assurance review process at all levels.

Conclusion

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

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

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

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Dr. Davis Nelson, Chair
- Mrs. Theresea Goode, Vice Chair (Danville Middle School)
- Mr. Gary Williams, Team Member (Franklin County Board of Education)
- Robyn Baggett, Team Member (Whitfield County School System)
- Mr. Tim Solley, Team Member (Central School)

AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems

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

Vision and Purpose

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

Governance and Leadership

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

Teaching and Learning

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

Documenting and Using Results

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

Resource and Support Systems

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

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

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

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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