

Report of the Quality Assurance Review Team for Van Voorhis Elementary School

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AdvancED is the unified organization of the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE).

Quality Assurance Review Report

Contents

About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI 3

Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review 4

Summary of Findings 5

 Commendations 5

 Recommendations 6

 Next Steps 7

Standards for Accreditation 9

 Standard 1. Vision and Purpose 9

 Standard 2. Governance and Leadership 10

 Standard 3. Teaching and Learning 11

 Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results 12

 Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems 13

 Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships 15

 Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement 16

Conclusion 18

Appendix 19

 Quality Assurance Review Team Members 19

 AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools 19

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

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

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

1) Meet the AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools. Schools demonstrate adherence to the seven AdvancED standards 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 recommendations to help the school improve. The team provides an oral exit report to the school and a written report detailing the team's recommendations. The school acts on the team's recommendations and submits a progress report two years 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.
2. Assess the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance.
3. Identify commendations and recommendations 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 recommendations for improvement.

Using the Report - Acting on the Recommendations. The school uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The school is held accountable for addressing the recommendations identified in the report. The NCA CASI/SACS CASI State Office is available to assist schools in addressing the recommendations. Two years following the Quality Assurance Review team visit, the school must submit a progress report detailing the actions and progress the school has made on the team's recommendations. The report is reviewed at the state and national level to ensure the school 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 following action from the commission.

Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), a division of AdvancED, visited the Van Voorhis Elementary School in Fort Knox, Kentucky on 02/11/2008 - 02/12/2008.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed the Principal, 1 member of the administrative team, 7 students, 8 parents, and 35 teachers. In addition, team members of 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:

- 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 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 recommendations.

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.

- **The school purposefully plans and provides an extensive number of support services for its stakeholders.**

Excellent counseling and support for students, a science enrichment program, a spouse deployment support group, and an active PTO not only provide necessary support but also opportunities for all stakeholders to become involved in the vision of the school.

By providing for the needs of its stakeholders, schools create a community of learners as well as the foundation for communication and support for all programs.

- **Exemplary efforts have been made to involve teachers in the understanding and use of data.**

The school completed a thorough analysis of its TerraNova assessment data resulting in the production of a quality profile. The creation of an I-drive for storage of assessment results will provide teachers with better accessibility to data to drive instruction.

Thorough analysis of assessment results permits the school to more accurately determine improvement goals.

- **The school provides a warm, welcoming environment that is safe and highly conducive to student learning.**

During interviews students and staff who were new to the school indicated that the environment was welcoming and provided a safe place to learn. The vision of "Nothing less than the best" supports this environment where teachers and students work collaboratively.

The environment established by the school community will be an integral part in the success of its improvement plan.

- **The tenets of the recently revised vision statement permeate the entire school community.**

Students were able to articulate the vision in their own vernacular. Observations supported evidence that teachers use the vision in making instructional decisions.

A well articulated vision, understood and embraced by all stakeholders, provides focus for the school improvement process.

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 school effectiveness. The school will be held accountable for making progress on each of the recommendations noted in this section. Two years following this review, the school will be asked to submit a progress report on these recommendations.

- **Complete the remaining phases in developing the school improvement plan:**
 - **Determine and share the essence of the goals.**
 - **Develop appropriate interventions, assessments, timelines, and monitoring activities.**
 - **Create a plan to assess staff needs related to the implementation of the strategies and develop a professional development plan to address those needs.**
 - **Design and use a data management system that will assist teachers in collecting and analyzing assessment results in support of the goals.**

The school is in the beginning stages of the school improvement process. A profile that has been analyzed was used to determine the school's two improvement goals.

Completing all phases of the school improvement process positions the school for success in the identified goal areas.

- **Create and employ strategies to implement technology into the curriculum; this implies more than student use of computers but focuses on using technology to enrich and expand student learning opportunities as well as improving effectiveness in providing instruction.**

Observations indicated that technology hardware is available but limited use was observed. Interviews with students indicated that technology was primarily used for remediation and indoor recess activities.

Integration of technology into the active curriculum of the school can enhance learning and assist in meeting the school's improvement goals.

- **Analyze the current channels for communication and implement more effective ways to collect and disseminate information as well as collaborate with stakeholders. This would include communication to improve the vertical articulation of the curriculum.**

Information gained from interviews indicated that students had not played an active role in the school improvement process. The school also has several channels for communication, some effective, others ineffective.

Communication and involvement of all stakeholders in the improvement process creates an increase in "buy-in" and understanding of the school's direction and focus.

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 recommendations made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the recommendations.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the school's efforts to improve student performance and school effectiveness.
5. Two years 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 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 schools with their improvement efforts. Available any where, any time, the network can be queried for information on a variety of school improvement subjects. The AdvancED Research and Development division provides research, handbooks, and tools to assist schools with continuous improvement. In addition, your state office provides hands-on professional development and ongoing technical assistance. Contact your state office for more information on the range of resources available to you.

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 NCA CASI logo is available through the NCA CASI website for schools to post on their website and in school communications. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and more 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 recommendations 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.

Standards for Accreditation

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

Standard 1. Vision and Purpose

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

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

The staff, under the leadership of the School Improvement Team (SIT), recently created a very concise vision statement, "Nothing less than the best!" This vision is displayed through the school building. School staff has articulated the vision to students in a "kid friendly" way. Students can articulate what the vision means. During interview sessions, a student shared the following description of the vision: "If we work together and do our best, we can accomplish just about anything." Although in interviews the SIT reported that methods had been used to articulate the vision to all stakeholders, parents indicated that they were not aware of the "new" vision statement. In addition, there was no evidence to indicate that the students, command, or parents were involved in the creation of the vision.

The school created its profile, analyzed that data, and identified two school improvement goals. During an interview, the principal indicated that these goals are aligned with the vision. Teacher interviews indicated that the school's vision statement is being used to guide teaching practices.

While the vision statement is newly developed, plans for reviewing it have not been determined.

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

- Teachers have successfully and clearly articulated the vision statement to the students.
- Students are able to convey an understanding of the newly developed vision statement as evidenced in their ability to paraphrase it and put it into their own vernacular.

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

- Develop and implement a plan to clearly articulate the vision statement to all stakeholders.
- Employ strategies to include all stakeholders in the future review and revision of the vision statement.

Finding: Van Voorhis Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 2. Governance and Leadership

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

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

The school's leadership is an advocate for the vision and improvement efforts. The principal together with the SIT presently are keepers of the vision and have thorough knowledge of the phases for school improvement. They provide the enthusiasm behind the implementation of the school improvement process. Although this knowledge and vision are part of the foundation for school improvement, transfer of this knowledge and vision are important to sustain the improvement efforts. No plan was evident for the transfer of leadership and responsibilities. In addition, although students provided a tour of the school for the QAR team, very limited stakeholder involvement in leadership or decision making processes was observed, particularly with the parent and student groups.

The school prepared its profile and identified goals from an analysis of that data. A data management system to continue efforts to evaluate school and program effectiveness does not exist.

Customer satisfaction and climate surveys have recently been administered to stakeholders. The school provided results of these surveys in the profile. Areas for growth identified in the profile are to be addressed in the two improvement goals that the school has chosen.

The principal conducts a performance evaluation process for instructional staff. During interviews teachers noted both formal and informal processes are used to evaluate instruction and promote teacher professional growth.

Parents communicate with the school leadership via an open door policy, comment box, and the Wiki site on the Internet. Parents may provide feedback related to school improvement at the school's website; however, the principal indicated that there has been limited or no feedback.

Observations, interviews, and an examination of artifacts indicated the following: The staff demonstrates a positive commitment to providing remedial interventions to students. Leadership supports efforts by providing release time and professional development hours to assist teachers in creating time to work together. Grade level team leaders meet during Wednesday Connections. Utilizing classroom coverage by paraprofessionals, grade level teachers meet regularly to collaborate and develop lesson plans using the curriculum alignment model.

Curricular activities during the school day are available to students, but evidence to support the availability of extra-curricular activities is not present.

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

- The school's leadership holds the vision, understands the next steps, and displays enthusiasm for the school improvement process.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement for

consideration by the school:

- Employ new and different ways to engage all stakeholders in multiple aspects of the decision making process.
- Create and implement a plan for the transfer of leadership as well as knowledge related to the school improvement process.

Finding: Van Voorhis Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

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

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

The school continues to improve its efforts in teaching and learning. Interviews with teachers and observations of classrooms indicate the staff is beginning to integrate subjects across the curriculum, not teaching curricular areas in isolation. The school follows a DoDEA based standards curriculum as evidenced by copies of the standards posted in classrooms and observing instruction related to standards.

The school has recently focused on curriculum alignment. This occurred as a result of a thorough examination of the TerraNova scores and alignment of the results to the standards to determine curricular gaps. Teacher interviews indicated that a thorough item analysis of the TerraNova provided specific areas for improvement. An increase in the most recent TerraNova scores is being attributed to this effort to align the curriculum according to the principal.

Collaboration within grade levels was observed; however, most of the focus appeared to be in third grade. While the curriculum alignment may have occurred, there was little evidence to support vertical collaboration and alignment between grade levels.

Teachers use a common language within each curricular area; however, parents are not aware of the common language. Parents indicated during their interview that access to this vocabulary would enable them to assist students at home.

Students feel safe in school. Support personnel and parents described the school as a warm and caring environment. A brand new cafeteria staff feels welcome and accepted by staff and students. A parent expressed that the relocation of classrooms provides third grade students with an opportunity to provide behavioral role modeling for the other grade levels. The maintenance staff is visible and takes pride in providing a clean and operational environment

Most of the classrooms observed exhibited teacher led instruction rather than student led. There were limited instances of students reading in groups or independently. There was some evidence of theme planning. Use of word walls across all grade levels and curricular areas was present. Student engagement was inconsistent with some students on task while others were

not. Some evidence of higher level thinking and deductive reasoning was observed, e.g., where would you find a crust?

An effort to include Spanish into the curriculum has been initiated. The Morning Meeting (video announcements made to the entire school) contained songs and speech in Spanish.

While Morning Meetings are an excellent way to address the entire school community, teacher use of this time to take care of routine tasks was not observed. Rather, teachers took attendance and completed other routine tasks after the Morning Meeting concluded, thus not effectively using instructional time.

Students provided information related to the use of assessments in the classroom. They felt that teachers gave time to think again if they did not respond correctly. Teachers gave quality feedback to improve the learning process.

Students also described the use of technology during interviews noting that computers are used only for indoor recess. Technology use by staff was evident through the creation of the I-drive to maintain assessment data.

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

- An integrated curriculum is present as teachers use cross curricular activities to more effectively use instructional time.
- All staff members and students, especially those new to the school this year, indicated that a caring, warm, welcoming, and safe place to work and learn exists.
- Students learn in a print rich environment as evidenced in observations made in the music and physical education classes.

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

- Initiate staff-wide conversations regarding classroom use of time during Morning Meetings in an effort to maximize instruction and protect learning time.
- Implement a plan to align the curriculum vertically.
- Assess the present use of technology and create and implement a plan to integrate its use into the curriculum. This would include using the technology to enhance learning and improve the effective use of time.
- Evaluate current teaching strategies; employ more student led strategies.
- Create and implement a method to provide common vocabulary to parents. Use of the Wiki site may be an option in accomplishing this tasks.

Finding: Van Voorhis Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results

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

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

preponderance of evidence:

Using data to improve instruction has been at the forefront as the school proceeds through the school improvement process. TerraNova results were disaggregated, analyzed, and aligned with the DoDEA standards in order to identify gaps in the curriculum. A thorough item analysis provided information to drive instructional change. The school uses the I-drive on the computer server to make this data information available to teachers. A plan to include local assessments on the I-drive was not evident. The school presently uses the district student information system to house demographic information.

Since the school is still in the beginning stages of the school improvement process, assessments and data collection procedures to support the two identified goals have not been determined. Communication with the intermediate schools and teachers regarding student progress and needs was also not evident. At present the school has communication channels to share information with stakeholders; however, relating student achievement results to the improvement goals has not occurred.

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

- The staff utilized a thorough process to evaluate the results of the TerraNova, disaggregating data into subgroups, performing an item analysis, and correlating the information back to the DoDEA standards, thereby giving the school community in-depth information about the students.

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

- Identify and implement assessments to measure the identified goals.
- Solicit information regarding student progress in the intermediate schools in more formal and cohesive ways.
- Establish procedures to collect and retain data that indicate trends in student achievement and demographics. Identify how this data will be collected and analyzed.

Finding: Van Voorhis Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems

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

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

The human, material, and fiscal resources necessary to implement the curriculum are provided. Student support is a primary focus. Special needs students are provided support and are integrated into the classroom. The support staff is actively involved in the school through collaboration, instruction, technical support of academics, and student safety and well-being. The counseling program provides support to students throughout the day. During interviews students indicated that they felt very comfortable talking with the counselor about

problems. Students of deployed soldiers are provided support from school personnel in groups during the academic day. In addition, the non-deployed spouse is provided support in an effort to ameliorate the emotional and social impact.

Communication with parents regarding student progress was evident through emails and newsletters. Parents indicated that they receive limited suggestions to help them assist their children at home with school work.

The building is well maintained and well lighted, has adequate space for the instructional programs and storage, and is safe. Students reported feeling safe, welcome, and prepared in the event of a natural disaster. They are familiar with fire and tornado drills. There is no evidence of after school or extra-curricular activities.

Technology was observed to be in limited use to support educational programs. Observations and conversations with students indicated that computers in the classrooms were used to provide activities during inside recess.

Through an examination of artifacts and interviews, evidence of professional development activities exists. The school has established weekly team planning time that is used by grade levels for collaboration on curriculum and instructional strategies. There was little evidence of vertical collaboration. Mentoring opportunities and peer observations were cited as strategies to improve and enhance instruction. The school leadership stated that the staff was relatively transparent and open to mentoring by peers. The QAR team recognized the staff engagement in professional development activities but was not able to identify any assessment activity to determine needs. Regular and support staff are appropriately assigned and were observed by the QAR team as being actively engaged in the instructional process.

Although financial cuts have occurred, the school operates under a fiscally responsible budget and provides resources needed by students and staff.

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

- The guidance counselor provides an exemplary program that supports the emotional needs of both parents and students.
- The science program provides enrichment for students by providing lessons and support for the classroom teachers.

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

- Create and implement a plan to assess the professional development needs of all staff members.
- Develop and implement a school-wide plan to use technology in support of instruction.
- Create a channel to communicate appropriate strategies to use in support of homework and school instruction to parents.

Finding: Van Voorhis Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

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

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

Strategies to solicit understanding, commitment, and support from stakeholders have been implemented. The following efforts are in place to provide formal channels to listen, solicit input, and inform stakeholders: Comment Box, Electronic Notes (weekly), Wiki site, website, and an open door policy that welcomes comments and concerns.

A training program for parents with a reading focus and a support group for deployment spouses provide services that are directly related to the school and ultimately assist in supporting students.

The school welcomes parent participation. During the QAR visit a parent volunteer was observed assisting the school nurse. PTO members were also present during the school day preparing a special activity for students.

Parents receive information related to student progress. Student agendas and daily notes provide parents with information to assist their students at home on a limited basis. During an interview, a parent related that the school had provided the support necessary for her son to improve in reading comprehension during the first year of attendance.

Although the school has made efforts to include all stakeholders, no evidence was found that supports students having played an active part in providing feedback to teachers and staff. Interviewed parents also indicated that there is limited information distributed to assist them in working with their children at home. The school's website contains a section devoted to soliciting parent feedback regarding the school's improvement efforts; the principal reported that it is not actively used by parents.

Student information and assessment results are provided to teachers via the I-Drive. Even though this system may be limited in scope, it does provide teachers with data to improve instruction.

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

- An active PTO creates a parent presence within the school.
- The school provides support for deployment spouses.
- The school is beginning to provide means for teachers to more readily access data, i.e., data found on the I-Drive.

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

- Develop and implement a plan to evaluate the school's present communication system. Identify activities that work and don't work. Create solutions to improve communication with all stakeholders. Evaluate the success of those solutions.
- Expand the use of the Wiki site to assist parents in understanding academic specific

vocabulary.

- Institute a program to involve students in the school improvement process.
- Increase communication with teachers at the fourth grade level in order to improve the vertical articulation of the curriculum and create smoother transitions for students.

Finding: Van Voorhis Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

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

The school prepared a comprehensive school profile, triangulated the data, and identified two student performance goals. Eight phases have been clearly defined, and the school has moved through the first three and a half. The school is poised to write a mission statement and develop the school improvement plan. Interviews, observations, and artifacts indicate that an understanding exists among staff on steps that need to be taken to complete the continuous improvement plan. The school stated that it provides opportunities for stakeholders to be involved in the process; but the QAR team was not able to find clear evidence parents, command representation, and students are actively engaged. During classroom observations, the role of the instructional aide was clear. They are potentially an integral part of the instructional process and the student academic success. Nevertheless, while they are another stakeholder, there is no evidence related to their involvement in the continuous improvement process.

Interviews with teachers and school leadership indicated that the school's vision "Together: Nothing Less than the Best", the environmental scan data, and the academic achievement of students is a compelling force behind the selection of goals. In interviews with a student focus group, students were able to explain the vision and tell the QAR team what, in their own words, the vision meant to them. Professional development activities have not yet been planned, as the continuous improvement plan has not been written, and there are no interventions developed. A staff needs assessment has not been used to determine the areas of needed support or intervention that will assist teachers in providing instruction to help students improve their ability to comprehend and think critically about what they read, improve their ability to problem solve, and communicate their mathematical reasoning.

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

- The school produced a complete profile that addresses all the required areas. The analysis of TerraNova data contained in the profile is commendable.

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

- Establish a needs assessment process related to the implementation of the school goals.

- Solicit input from all staff and create a plan for professional development.
- Engage pre-kindergarten through third grade staff in a vertical discussion related to curriculum and interventions in support of the goals and the continuous improvement plan.
 - Arrange time and processes to engage all stakeholders in the development, writing, and implementation of the continuous improvement plan.

Finding: Van Voorhis Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Conclusion

The commendations and recommendations 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 recommendations 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 several recommendations for improvement that the school will need to address. Two years following this review, the school 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 Jo Blease, 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 NCA CASI accreditation with AdvancED.

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Jo Ann Roscoe, Chair
- Cheryl Tuffy, Vice Chair
- Bill Rose, Team Member
- Brenda Craw, Team Member
- Melissa Hayes, Team Member
- Melissa Klopfer, Team Member

AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

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

Vision and Purpose

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

Governance and Leadership

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

Teaching and Learning

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

Documenting and Using Results

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

Resource and Support Systems

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

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

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

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

