



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.

Standards Assessment Report

Austin Career Education Center

5352 W Chicago Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60651

Prepared for the AdvancED Quality Assurance Review

Report Status : Accepted

Report Open Date : March 19, 2008

Report Due Date : February 25, 2009

Report Submitted Date : February 25, 2009

Report Accepted Date : February 26, 2009

Standards Assessment Report

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Introduction & Purpose of the Report

Introduction

The Standards Assessment Report is designed to serve as a valuable self-assessment and as a tool to help schools prepare for their Quality Assurance Review. The report is based on the AdvancED standards, which serve as the foundation of the accreditation process. In order to earn and maintain accreditation, schools must meet the AdvancED standards, engage in a process of continuous improvement, and host a Quality Assurance Review at least once every five years.

The Standards Assessment Report engages the school community in an in-depth assessment of each of the seven AdvancED standards. In completing the report, the school identifies the data, information, evidence, and documented results that validate that it is meeting each standard. This self assessment helps the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

The Standards Assessment Report also serves as the primary resource for the Quality Assurance Review Team, which uses the report to prepare for the visit to the school. The team uses insights gathered from the report and information obtained during the on-site visit to provide feedback to the school and to make an accreditation recommendation.

Structure of the Report

The Standards Assessment Report is organized by the AdvancED standards. For each standard, the report includes four sections: 1) considering the evidence; 2) indicators rubric; 3) focus questions; and 4) overall assessment. Each section reinforces the other sections by asking a question that builds on the prior section.

The section entitled "considering the evidence" allows school personnel to think about the practices and/or processes being implemented and identify evidence that will support its responses to the indicators rubric and focus questions. This section helps school stakeholders engage in a discussion about how it knows it is adhering to the standards. The section is not intended to engage the school in a collection of evidence, but rather in thoughtful dialogue about how it can demonstrate that quality practices, conditions, and results are occurring in the school. The section asks, "What practices/processes are being implemented, and are they effective?" or said another way, "How do we know we are doing what we say we are doing?"

The indicators rubric enables the school to assess the degree to which practices and/or processes are in place that indicate adherence to the standard and indicators. For each indicator, the school may check if the practices and/or processes are highly functional in the school, operational, emerging, or not evident. The school should use the rubric as an opportunity to ask itself challenging questions and to respond with accurate answers geared toward self-improvement. After completing the rubric, the school can quickly see areas of strength and opportunity. The section asks, "To what degree are the noted practices/processes in place?"

The focus questions allow the school to expand on and think more deeply about the responses to the indicators rubric. The focus questions provide an opportunity for the school to describe the systematic and systemic processes that are in place to support its ability to meet the indicators. The section asks, "How are the practices/processes implemented?"

The overall assessment describes how well schools are implementing practices and/or processes and the impact these practices and/or processes have on student results and overall school effectiveness. The overall assessment helps schools judge where they are in relation to each standard. The "operational" level is required in order to demonstrate meeting the standard. The section asks, "How well are we meeting the standard overall?"

Demographics

Public/Non-public:	Non-public
School Type:	AdvancED - Special Purpose
Charter School:	N/A
Enrollment:	230
Gender at School:	Co-Ed
Beginning Grade:	10
Ending Grade:	12
Alternate Beginning Grade:	
Alternate Ending Grade:	
Location Type:	Urban
Gender at School:	Co-Ed
Religious Denomination:	Not Applicable

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.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it commits to a shared purpose and direction. The school establishes expectations for student learning aligned with the school's vision that is supported by school personnel and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and school effectiveness. The school's vision guides allocations of time and human, material, and fiscal resources.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

1.1 Establishes a vision for the school in collaboration with its stakeholders:

Operational

1.2 Communicates the vision and purpose to build stakeholder understanding and support:

Operational

1.3 Identifies goals to advance the vision:

Operational

1.4 Develops and continuously maintains a profile of the school, its students, and the community:

Operational

1.5 Ensures that the school's vision and purpose guide the teaching and learning process:

Operational

1.6 Reviews its vision and purpose systematically and revises them when appropriate:

Operational

Focus Questions:

1. What is the process for establishing and building understanding of and commitment to the vision statement among stakeholders?

During the summer, there is a School Improvement Plan (SIP) review and writing of a new plan for a new school year. An essential component of the School Improvement Plan is a mission and vision statement. Each of these statements is reviewed by the staff and amended if necessary. The mission remains relatively constant while the vision may be more clearly defined throughout the years.

With everyone's participation in this review and writing process, we ensure that all internal stakeholders support the mission and vision of the school.

Students are initiated to the mission and vision of the school each semester during orientation. The orientation focuses students on preparing to learn for the upcoming semester and allows them to come up with individual missions and goals. They learn its importance having a mission and encouraged to use our as a model to create ones for themselves.

2. What is the school's process for developing a profile and systematically maintaining and using information that describes the school, its students, and their performance?

We collect data from many different areas. We have attendance data that we track using computer software. We also enter information about students that drop out of our program. We make a concerted effort to find out why students have dropped and if they have enrolled in another program. We also use this software to track grades, pre and post tests of the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), and graduation rates. All graduates are given a survey to complete about post high school plans and contact information and interviewed by a panel of staff.

All of this information is reviewed during our annual School Improvement Plan meeting. And obstacles or areas of weakness are addressed as a whole program.

Information from this software is also given to the teachers to make adjustments in curriculum. Teachers know attendance rates for individual classes and grade distributions for each class. Finally, reading and math teachers know how their students performed on the TABE. The pieces let teachers assess areas of concern and make adjustments for the next year to improve student performance.

3. How does the leadership ensure that the school's vision, purpose, and goals guide the teaching and learning process?

All teachers receive copies of the School Improvement Plan, and this is a guiding force as teachers complete curriculum frameworks and lesson plans. Teachers present lesson to each other at faculty meetings as to what they are doing in their classrooms related to the SIP goals. Finally, lesson plans are reviewed by the assistant director.

4. What process is used to ensure that the vision and purpose of the school remain current and aligned with the school's expectations for student learning and school effectiveness?

The School Improvement Plan is reviewed and a new one is created every year. Part of this review is evaluating data and assessing school effectiveness so that we can find areas for improvement. Some goals continue from year-to-year

and some new goals and plans are created to improve areas of weakness. The entire staff takes part in this process.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school has committed to a shared purpose and direction. The school has clearly defined expectations for student learning aligned with the school's vision that is supported by school personnel and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and school effectiveness. The school's vision guides allocations of time and human, material, and fiscal resources. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "operational" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Standard 2. Governance and Leadership

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

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it has leaders who are advocates for the school's vision and improvement efforts. The leaders provide direction and allocate resources to implement curricular and co-curricular programs that enable students to achieve expectations for their learning. Leaders encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for school improvement among stakeholders. The school's policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
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Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school operates under the jurisdiction of a governing board that:

2.1 Establishes policies and procedures that provide for the effective operation of the school:

Operational

2.2 Recognizes and preserves the executive, administrative, and leadership prerogatives of the administrative head of the school:

Highly Functional

2.3 Ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations:

Highly Functional

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school has leadership that:

2.4 Employs a system that provides for analysis and review of student performance and school effectiveness:

Highly Functional

2.5 Fosters a learning community:

Highly Functional

2.6 Provides teachers and students opportunities to lead:

Highly Functional

2.7 Provides stakeholders meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership:

Highly Functional

2.8 Controls curricular and extracurricular activities that are sponsored by the school:

Highly Functional

2.9 Responds to community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction:

Highly Functional

2.10 Implements an evaluation system that provides for the professional growth of all personnel:

Highly Functional

Focus Questions:

1. What is the process for establishing, communicating, and implementing policies and procedures for the effective operation of the school?

We use the following avenues to establish, communicate, and implement policies and procedures:

- staff handbook
- student contract
- staff meetings
- student orientation
- staff portfolio evaluations
- student portfolios

2. What process does the school's leadership use to evaluate school effectiveness and student performance?

We collect as much data as possible and review it twice a year after each semester. We use:

- student standardized test scores
- attendance rates
- drop-out rates
- grades
- graduation rates

We use student exit interviews and staff input, as well to determine school effectiveness and student performance.

3. In what ways are stakeholders, including staff, given opportunities to provide leadership and to contribute to the decision-making process?

Staff assist in running staff meetings. Teachers in particular present information to each other, such as literacy, numeracy, and technology lesson plans. The all school annual review and SIP meeting in the summer allows for all staff to contribute to the writing of the new SIP for the following year. At this meeting any changes that need to be

made to the vision or purpose of the school are made as well.

4. What policies and processes are in place to ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation?

All policies apply equally to all staff and all students. Each of these stakeholders receive copies of the policies and sign statements of understanding. There is due process written into the policies regarding complaints or questions that arise from any of these stakeholders.

Overall Assessment:

Highly Functional: The school has leaders who are advocates for the school's vision and improvement efforts. The leaders provide direction, lend support, and systematically allocate resources for systemic and sustainable implementation of curricular and co-curricular programs that enable students to achieve expectations for their learning. Leaders ensure collaboration and shared responsibility for school improvement among stakeholders with clearly defined expectations for each stakeholder group. The leaders provide stakeholders meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership. The school's policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation and are deeply embedded in the way the school functions. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "highly functional" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

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

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning that provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Teachers use proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process. Teachers provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations. Teachers give students feedback to improve their performance.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

3.1 Develops and implements curriculum based on clearly defined expectations for student learning:
Highly Functional

3.2 Promotes active involvement of students in the learning process, including opportunities for them to explore application of higher-order thinking skills and investigate new approaches to applying their learning:
Highly Functional

3.3 Gathers, analyzes, and uses data and research in making curricular and instructional choices:
Operational

3.4 Designs and uses instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that are research-based and reflective of best practice:
Operational

3.5 Offers a curriculum that challenges each student to excel, reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity:
Operational

3.6 Allocates and protects instructional time to support student learning:

Highly Functional

3.7 Provides for articulation and alignment between and among all levels of schools:

Operational

3.8 Implements interventions to help students meet expectations for student learning:

Operational

3.9 Monitors school climate and takes appropriate steps to ensure that it is conducive to student learning:

Highly Functional

3.10 Provides comprehensive information and media services that support the curricular and instructional programs:

Highly Functional

3.11 Ensures that all students and staff members have regular and ready access to instructional technology and a comprehensive materials collection that supports the curricular and instructional program:

Operational

Focus Questions:

1. How does the school ensure that the curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments are aligned and articulated across grade levels in support of the expectations for student learning?

All teachers have completed Essential Skills Frameworks for each of the classes they are teaching. This framework is aligned with state goals and creates a skill-based curriculum. They are leveled appropriately for each class and there is a scope and sequence that is followed by the registration coordinator.

2. In what ways does the school ensure the implementation of research-based instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that facilitate achievement for all students?

Through professional development activities and peer-to-peer teacher presentations, we ensure that innovations and activities facilitate achievement for all students.

The teacher evaluation portfolio also requires professional development, goals, and documentation of student-centered activities based in best practice.

3. What processes are implemented to ensure that teachers are well-prepared and effectively implementing the curriculum?

Observations by the administration, two formal and at least four informal, are done throughout the year. Peer observations are required in the teaching portfolio as well as lesson plans and goals directed at improving teacher practice.

4. How does the school provide every student access to comprehensive information, instructional technology, and media services?

All teachers have computers and printers in their classrooms, as well as projectors. The school has a computer lab

with a printer, portable lab with laptop computers and a printer, and a mini portable lab with laptops. All computers are maintained on a regular basis and all have internet access. All classes are required to have a technology component using computers in some way.

At the beginning of each semester, during student orientation, students are orientated to the computer lab, our online teacher filing system, and required to set up an internet account.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning that provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The school demonstrates evidence of alignment between the curriculum and instructional practices with systematic implementation across the school. Teachers use proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process. Teachers provide frequent opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations. Teachers give students regular feedback to improve their performance. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "operational" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

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.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly defined performance measures. The system is used to assess student performance on expectations for student learning, evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, and determine interventions to improve student performance. The assessment system yields timely and accurate information that is meaningful and useful to school leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders in understanding student performance, school effectiveness, and the results of improvement efforts.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

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Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

4.1 Establishes performance measures for student learning that yield information that is reliable, valid, and bias free:

Operational

4.2 Develops and implements a comprehensive assessment system for assessing progress toward meeting the expectations for student learning:

Operational

4.3 Uses student assessment data for making decisions for continuous improvement of teaching and learning processes:

Operational

4.4 Conducts a systematic analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness and uses the results to improve student performance:

Operational

4.5 Communicates the results of student performance and school effectiveness to all stakeholders:

Emerging

4.6 Uses comparison and trend data of student performance from comparable schools in evaluating its effectiveness:

Emerging

4.7 Demonstrates verifiable growth in student performance:

Emerging

4.8 Maintains a secure, accurate, and complete student record system in accordance with state and federal regulations:

Operational

Focus Questions:

1. How is the assessment system currently used in your school to analyze changes in student performance?

Student scores from the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) are reviewed by the administration and teachers related to math and English. These scores are used as one tool to assess school affectiveness and student performance.

Students are given their individual scores when they receive their report cards.

Graduate portfolios are also used to assess student performance and help us define what we want students to be able to do when they graduate, according to a rubric.

2. What are you doing to ensure that assessment results are timely, relevant, and communicated in a way that can be used by teachers, students, parents, and external stakeholders to aid the performance of individual students?

Students are tested when they enter ACEC. These results are entered into the student's folder and known by the registration coordinator before he schedules students for classes. This ensures that the student will be given appropriate classes at the appropriate academic level. Students are told their scores when they are told that they have been accepted into the school. They are also told that they are expected to go up while they attend school here.

Potential graduates are also given the test. When tests are scored, results are entered and spreadsheets are given out to teachers. Students receive their scores on their report cards.

3. How are data used to understand and improve overall school effectiveness?

TABE scores are one piece of data that we use to understand school effectiveness. We use many different types of data in a small, administrative review in the winter, and an all school annual review in the summer. These guide us in writing our School Improvement Plan.

4. How are teachers trained to understand and use data in the classroom?

At the beginning of the year, all teachers take part in assisting in the registration process. At this time, teachers are taught how to administer the test, what the test scores mean, and how to make use of them in the classroom.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly defined performance measures that yield valid and reliable results. The system is used to assess student performance on expectations for student learning, evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, and determine interventions to improve student performance. The assessment system yields timely and accurate information that is meaningful and useful to school leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders in understanding student performance, school effectiveness, and the results of improvement efforts. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "operational" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

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.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, to meet special needs, and to comply with applicable regulations. The school employs and allocates staff that are well qualified for their assignments. The school provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff to improve their effectiveness. The school ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

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Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

5.1 Recruits, employs, and mentors qualified professional staff that are capable of fulfilling assigned roles and responsibilities:

Operational

5.2 Assigns professional staff responsibilities based on their qualifications (i.e., professional preparation, ability, knowledge, and experience):

Operational

5.3 Ensures that all staff participate in a continuous program of professional development:

Operational

5.4 Provides and assigns staff that are sufficient in number to meet the vision and purpose of the school:

Operational

5.5 Budgets sufficient resources to support its educational programs and to implement its plans for improvement:

Highly Functional

5.6 Monitors all financial transactions through a recognized, regularly audited accounting system:

Operational

5.7 Maintains the site, facilities, services, and equipment to provide an environment that is safe and orderly for all occupants:

Operational

5.8 Possesses a written security and crisis management plan with appropriate training for stakeholders:

Operational

5.9 Ensures that each student has access to guidance services that include, but are not limited to, counseling, appraisal, mentoring, staff consulting, referral, and educational and career planning:

Operational

5.10 Provides appropriate support for students with special needs:

Operational

Focus Questions:

1. What is the process for recruitment, induction, placement, development, evaluation, and retention of qualified teachers, administrators, and support staff?

We currently recruit teachers through advertisements in the local newspapers, on craigslist.com, and local job fairs. There are two to three interviews with each qualified candidate, including meeting current teachers and sitting in on at least one class, so that potential teachers know what the job here is all about. We want someone who wants to be here.

Induction and placement are done by the assistant director in charge of evaluations. Depending on how many new teachers are coming in in one year, this will be done individually or in a group. The staff handbook is reviewed. How to create lesson plans is reviewed. And an overview of the teacher evaluation portfolio is given. Depending on the group, there are some classroom scenarios in regards to discipline that are role played and discussed.

Regular staff meetings are scheduled throughout the year and professional development opportunities are scheduled as well.

Evaluations are conducted through a portfolio system that includes lesson plans, curriculum frameworks, evidence of goals and working towards those goals, professional development work, and observations. Formal observations are conducted twice a year and informal are done at least four times a year.

2. How does the leadership ensure that the allocation of financial resources is supportive of the school's vision, educational programs, and its plans for school improvement?

The director takes input from the assistant directors. The assistant directors gather information from the staff about what areas: materials, technology, support staff, are in need of more resources from the budget. The director makes the final budget decisions and writes the budget.

3. How does the leadership ensure a safe and orderly environment for students and staff?

A school culture of respect is promoted through staff orientation, student orientation, and staff conduct as a role

model. We are a very small school in a very small space. Bells let students know when periods begin and end. Teachers and administrators assist in the hallways making sure that students get to class on time. Doors are locked from the outside to make sure that only people that belong in the building are in the building. All visitors are required to enter through the Long Avenue door and sign-in.

4. What process is used to ensure and monitor that each student has access to guidance and resource services that meet the needs of the student?

All students are assigned to a teacher advisor and guidance counselor. There are designated advisory days throughout the semester. When a student enters ACEC, he completes an Alternative Education Plan (AEP). This includes the student's learning style, goals, and interests. One copy of this plan goes into the student's portfolio. It is updated and reviewed every semester by the advisor and the student. The teacher advisor assists students with the portfolio, implements a community service project, implements One School, One Read, and helps students with day-to-day progress in school.

One copy of the AEP goes to the student's guidance counselor. The counselor meets with every student in his/her caseload at least once a semester. Potential graduates meet with their counselors more than once to ensure they are completing the graduation requirements. This checklist and meeting times are attached to the student's folder.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school has human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, to meet special needs, and to comply with applicable regulations. The school employs and allocates staff members who are well qualified for their assignments. The school provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff to improve their effectiveness, including both professional and support staff. The school ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "operational" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

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

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it has the understanding, commitment, and support of stakeholders. School personnel seek opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership among stakeholders to help students learn and advance improvement efforts.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
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Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

6.1 Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning:

Operational

6.2 Has formal channels to listen to and communicate with stakeholders:

Operational

6.3 Solicits the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance the work of the school:

Emerging

6.4 Communicates the expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to all stakeholders:

Operational

6.5 Provides information about students, their performance, and school effectiveness that is meaningful and useful to stakeholders:

Operational

Focus Questions:

1. How does the school's leadership ensure that the school is responsive to community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction?

Many efforts are made to reach out to the community that surrounds the school.

- Community meetings are attended at least twice a year by school administration.
- The Board meeting is posted and advertised and open to any and all stakeholders.
- Parents are invited to school twice a year to review student progress.

Student input is given through Student Council and through exit interviews that all graduates are required to give. Through these interviews, staff has a chance to listen to student concerns and student perceptions of positive and negative aspects of the school.

2. How does the school's leadership foster a learning community?

The school's leadership fosters a learning community in many different ways.

- Setting aside time and monies for professional development
- Requiring professional development for teacher evaluation portfolios
- One School, One Read project
- Teacher Lunchtime Article Reviews
- Encouraging and setting time aside for co-teaching
- Setting time and monies aside for current technology and offering training on that technology
- Student Orientation Days
- Advisories, which include Service Learning Projects

3. What avenues are used to communicate information to stakeholders about students, their performance, and school effectiveness?

We use various resources to communicate information about the school.

1. Each student received a mid-term report and report card.
2. Twice a year, we have open houses so that students and parents can discuss grades and concerns with teachers and administration.
3. Students work on a portfolio from the time they first enroll at ACEC until they graduate. This is a culminating project in which students show growth and what they have learned while at ACEC. Feedback is given to students on the portfolio several times a year.
4. An annual board meeting is advertised at the school and on our web site. This board meeting is open to any and all stakeholders.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school has the understanding, commitment, and support of stakeholders. School personnel seek opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership among stakeholders to help students learn and advance improvement efforts and can demonstrate good participation by some stakeholder groups. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "operational" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns the functions of the school with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained and the school demonstrates progress in improving student performance and school effectiveness. New improvement efforts are informed by the results of earlier efforts through reflection and assessment of the improvement process.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

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Indicators: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

7.1 Engages in a continuous process of improvement 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):

Operational

7.2 Engages stakeholders in the processes of continuous improvement:

Operational

7.3 Ensures that plans for continuous improvement are aligned with the vision and purpose of the school and expectations for student learning:

Operational

7.4 Provides professional development for school personnel to help them implement improvement interventions to achieve improvement goals:

Operational

7.5 Monitors and communicates the results of improvement efforts to stakeholders:

Operational

7.6 Evaluates and documents the effectiveness and impact of its continuous process of improvement:

Operational

Focus Questions:

1. What is the process for continuous improvement used by the school and what are the results that this process is delivering for student performance and school effectiveness?

The SIP review in the summer uses data compiled by the assistant directors. This data is disseminated to and evaluated by the staff. During this review, all staff have input on identifying areas of weakness and ways to improve school effectiveness.

There is a smaller review done after first semester by the administration only. This allows for some mid-year adjustments.

We have found, as a staff, that have a complete picture of the entire year gives a more accurate picture of student achievement and school performance. All of this data is taken into consideration as curriculum is reviewed for the next school year.

2. What steps are taken to ensure that the improvement goals reflect student learning needs that are aligned with the vision and purpose of the school?

We use student feedback, objective data, and teacher and staff input to ensure that goals reflect student learning needs. All of these resources give us the most complete picture on school effectiveness. Review of these resources lets us know if the vision and purpose of the school are being carried out.

3. What process is used to ensure that the school personnel are provided professional development and technical assistance to implement interventions and achieve improvement goals?

All teachers are required to list professional development hours as part of their portfolio. Some hours are offered from the school and others are done off site through conferences and meetings. Feedback on what teachers want to learn more about and portfolio conversations ensure that staff are being supported in their goals.

Support staff evaluations are based on goals decided upon by the administrator and staff person at the beginning of the year. Progress towards those goals are reviewed in the spring.

4. How does the leadership ensure that the improvement plan is implemented, monitored, achieved, and communicated to stakeholders?

The staff evaluation process allows for conversation throughout the year on how the SIP is being implemented and achieved. All evaluations are done by portfolio. Individual goals are tied to SIP goals and tracked by the teacher or staff member and the administrator. The evaluating administrator and staff member meet several times throughout the year to review goals and portfolio elements. This continuing conversation is aimed at how the staff member is contributing to the success of the school by achieving the outlined goals.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns most functions of the school with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained and the school demonstrates progress in improving student performance and school effectiveness. New improvement efforts are informed by the results of earlier efforts through reflection and assessment of the improvement process. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "operational" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Conclusion

The following focus questions reflect the school's overall analysis of its internal evaluation of the accreditation standards.

Focus Questions

As you review your responses to the standards, what major trends, themes, or areas of focus emerge that cut across the seven standards?

Creating a learning community is a value shared by all staff and a major focus of the school. We are strongly invested in the portfolio system for staff and student evaluation. This kind of process emphasizes a process and not just an answer or one end result. It focuses on growth and improvement. The teachers taking part in this process have been better able to help students taking part in the this process because we are doing it as a whole school.

Based on your review of these cross-cutting themes/trends and each of the seven standards, what would you consider to be your school's greatest strengths?

Our communication and teacher collaboration have improved greatly in the last few years. More formal and informal conversations are going on about classroom successes and obstacles. One mentor teacher holds discussions every Friday after school with anyone that wants to discuss anything. Several teachers have team-taught courses and other have collaborated on certain projects.

Teaching can be very isolating and lonely. You are at work, but rarely with your colleagues. In our teaching setting with at-risk youth who haven't been very successful at school before, we need support. We need time to get problems out in the open, time to brainstorm ideas, and time to just vent. And we need to know we're not alone in our struggle to reach students and create lifetime learners.

Our staff works hard to support one another.

What would you consider to be your school's greatest challenges?

We have several major obstacles that we are always seeking to improve. Student retention, graduation rate, and parent involvement are always difficult to improve. We are always trying to find effective ways to keep students in school, on-track to graduate, and include their support networks in their education.

How will you use the insights gained from this self-assessment to inform and enhance your quality assurance and continuous improvement efforts?

This report will be shared with the faculty as a whole and discussed. It has highlighted some processes that are not very efficient, for example, reporting student test scores and teachers responding to that data. In a small school, it is easy to stick with a system that 'works' even if it is not the best way to get something done. Some of these avenues will be reviewed and improved by administration, with the help of the teachers.