

**Report of the
Quality Assurance Review Team
for
Hillsborough County Public Schools**

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Review Dates: 04/25/2010 - 04/28/2010



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

Contents

About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI	3
Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review	4
Summary of Findings	5
Commendations	6
Required Actions	7
Next Steps	8
Standards for Accreditation	10
Standard 1. Vision & Purpose	10
Standard 2. Governance & Leadership	12
Standard 3. Teaching & Learning	14
Standard 4. Documenting & Using Results	16
Standard 5. Resource & Support Systems	18
Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications & Relationships	20
Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement	22
Quality Assurance Findings	25
Conclusion	27
Appendix	28
Quality Assurance Review Team Members	28
AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems	28

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 Schools (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, school districts, and educational service agencies 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 and Policies for Quality School Systems.** School districts demonstrate adherence to the seven AdvancED standards and policies 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 required actions 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 required actions. The school district acts on the team's required actions and submits a progress report two years 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 and policies..
2. Assess the efficacy of the district's improvement process and methods for quality assurance.
3. Identify commendations and required actions 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 required actions for improvement.

Using the Report - Responding to the Required Actions. The school district uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The school district is held accountable for addressing the required actions identified in the report. The AdvancED State Office is available to assist the school district in addressing the required actions. 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 required actions. The report is reviewed at the state and national level to ensure the school district is addressing the required actions.

Accreditation Recommendation. The Quality Assurance Review team uses the findings from the onsite visit to make an accreditation recommendation that is reviewed 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 NCA CASI Postsecondary Office (NCA-CASI-PS), a division of AdvancED, visited Hillsborough County Public Schools on 04/25/2010 - 04/28/2010.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 414 administrators, 633 teachers, 48 support staff, 326 parents and business partners, 407 students, and 7 Board of Education members for a total of 1835 stakeholders. In addition to meeting with district personnel and stakeholders, the team visited 40 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:

1. Vision and Purpose
2. Governance and Leadership
3. Teaching and Learning
4. Documenting and Using Results
5. Resource and Support Systems
6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships
7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The AdvancED standards focus on systems 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 required actions that are provided below. The commendations and required actions 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 required actions.

Commendations

The Quality Assurance Review Team commends the Hillsborough County Public Schools 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.

- **Staff members and stakeholders of Hillsborough County Public Schools have collectively shaped a culture that supports the district purpose and strengthens its capacity to achieve its vision.**

Evidence shows that individuals throughout the district share attitudes and dispositions that have a positive impact on the way they relate with each other and approach their work. These include, but are not limited to, a relentless commitment to the success of all, high expectations for students and staff and conviction in their capacity for accomplishment. These beliefs are strengthened with a communal identity, collaborative spirit, passion for the work, pride in quality and a drive to be innovative and cutting edge.

A healthy culture serves as the foundation for organizational effectiveness, the means for realizing a vision and a force for unifying staff.

- **The leadership of Hillsborough County Public Schools successfully guides and champions the strategic focus and established culture.**

A rich body of information in support of effective leadership was identified and verified through multiple sources. Dedicated, high quality leaders are systemically embedded throughout the school district. This cadre of leaders includes the school board, superintendent, division heads, department leaders, principals, and teacher leaders. Resources and artifacts provide evidence of highly efficient fiscal management. This financial base is enhanced through the procurement of grants and forecast planning. In support of the district accreditation protocol, leadership provides the district with clear direction and relevant support through assistance, resources and empowerment. The leadership at all levels honors and models the established culture.

Quality leadership that pervades the district has the capacity to bring about desired results by empowering all to strive for excellence and providing the means to do so.

- **Hillsborough County Public Schools has developed and instituted a relevant, comprehensive, multifaceted and differentiated system of professional development.**

Offerings for professional development are structured to meet the needs of all staff, aligned with roles and responsibilities and are supportive of district goals and initiatives. Individuals at every level of the organization receive training to improve their competence, confidence and performance. This includes the school board and superintendent, all professional staff and all support staff. Professional development decisions are purposeful, aligned with district goals and driven by student performance data. Where appropriate they are individualized with varied delivery formats that include mentors, coaches, eLearning, district sponsored workshops and external training. Expectations for applying what has been learned and sharing it with colleagues are clearly communicated. Collectively this embodies the essence of a Professional Learning Community and supports the district's aspiration to "have a qualified teacher in every classroom." Additionally, quality professional development is the cornerstone of the district's hallmark grant for Empowering Effective Teachers.

Professional learning opportunities that are meaningful and of high quality create an atmosphere of professionalism, celebrate a culture of continued learning, build capacity to achieve purpose and boost the morale of the educational community.

- **Hillsborough County Public Schools employs a true systems approach to guide its continuous improvement efforts.**

A number of established practices give evidence of the effective and authentic implementation of systems thinking. A strong commitment and focus on the shared vision was expressed by all stakeholder groups. A powerful and consistent alignment among district, division and school priorities and initiatives was evident. Data are readily available and consistently used to allocate resources, make decisions, demonstrate learning and verify gains. Systemic and systematic procedures are in place to ensure thorough implementation, and maximum efficiency pervades this complex system. Cross functional collaboration takes place for a variety of purposes and is exemplified in a variety of contexts and combinations. The district demonstrated the effective implementation of a systems approach in the comprehensive, integrated, inclusive and systematic way they engaged in the district accreditation process and prepared for the Quality Assurance Review by AdvancED.

A systems approach employs purposeful systemic and systematic procedures that provide a framework to enhance district efficiency, strengthen alignment of system elements, create synergy of results and ensure sustainability of successes.

Required Actions

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

- **Develop and institute regular and intentional procedures to ensure the wealth of early stage initiatives reach full implementation and achieve maximum potential.**

A number of powerful programs have been embraced by the district and are now in the initial stages of implementation. These include Professional Learning Communities, Differentiated Instruction, Response to Intervention and Empowering Effective Teachers. Evidence confirms these are in various stages of acceptance and use throughout the district. Research on change shows that conscious practice, deliberate reflection, systematic processes and consistent monitoring promote fidelity of execution and contribute to sustainability. The commendations listed in the prior section (culture, leadership, professional development, systems approach) hold the potential to serve as leverage points in helping bring these early stage programs to fruition. Focused attention on the unfolding or evolution of these district-wide programs and practices will help ensure they are implemented with faithfulness, monitored for desired impact and that constructive momentum is maintained.

When these exciting initiatives are fully and authentically embedded into practice and become part of the culture, their true impact on teaching and learning can be realized.

- **Establish and utilize diverse internal quality assurance practices to strengthen and expand existing methods of support and current monitoring procedures.**

The district has fully instituted comprehensive data collection and analysis procedures to assess student performance. In response to these data, the district deploys significant human and material resources in an effort to aggressively target, support and monitor identified focus schools. Stakeholder testimony consistently illustrates and verifies how responsive and supportive the district is when assistance and resources are requested. The district would enhance its quality of leadership if it took purposeful action to guarantee on-site monitoring and assistance to all schools. This action would make certain that consistently high performing schools (not just those who need or request it) regularly receive beneficial feedback and support.

A proactive approach of this nature would ensure that all schools operate within a mindset of continuous improvement, strive to experience growth, receive formative evaluation and are expected to demonstrate increased student learning and school effectiveness.

- **Devise and operationalize district-wide processes that celebrate and encourage action research at the school and classroom levels.**

Professional staff articulated that they are empowered to implement research-based strategies and effective practices within the context of the varied learning environments. A significant number expressed a willingness to try approaches and adopt them if they are shown to be successful. Effective teaching and learning techniques should be documented, evaluated, described, replicated and sustained. This will provide the district with a warehouse of proven instructional practices.

Instituting an action research initiative will advocate responsible creative, innovative and risk-taking behavior. It will produce verifiable teaching and learning practices that can be foundational to promote success for all students and contribute to the narrowing of the achievement gap.

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 required actions made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the required actions.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the school district's efforts to improve student performance and district effectiveness.
5. Two years following the Quality Assurance Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the required actions. The report will be reviewed at the state and national level to ensure that significant progress is being made toward the required actions. Lack of progress can result in a change in accreditation status.
6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous

improvement, and document results.

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 required actions 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 required actions 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 required actions.

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 district vision, "To become the nation's leader in developing successful students," supported by the mission, "To provide an education that enables each student to excel as a successful and responsible citizen," are more than single objectives for the district; rather, they call all stakeholders to expect success in everything that is taught, how it is taught and how it is measured.

Interviews revealed that the vision and mission statements have been revised to reflect directives that are more motivating and inspiring than the previous statements had been. In interviews with the Quality Assurance Review (QAR) team, district-level staff members described and clarified processes in which broad community organization and business stakeholder input was attained through town meetings. Some internal school stakeholder input was sought as the statements were being developed, although broad school-based (teacher and parent) involvement and input was not evident in interviews with central office personnel, principals, teachers and parents. The community input that had been received was refined and crafted by a district Business Process Improvement (BPI) team specially trained in the development of vision and mission statements, and the statements were reviewed by internal district stakeholders before they were taken to and adopted by the school board. The plan is for that document to be used in 2009-2010 with a review and refinement process initiated during the 2010-2011 school year to keep the vision and mission statements current.

The vision and mission are communicated to stakeholders through a variety of district and school publications. These statements were posted in nearly every classroom visited by the QAR team, and artifact review confirmed their inclusion in student and teacher handbooks. These statements are highly visible to the public during televised meetings of the school board. To reach the agenda of the board, all items must address the district vision and mission. In her opening remarks at each board meeting, the superintendent emphasizes how these statements drive the board's decision-making process. While stakeholders interviewed during the QAR visit may not have quoted the exact words, broad understanding

and acceptance of both the vision and mission were evident in their responses to team questions. The extent to which the vision and mission drive instruction was clearly evident in classroom observations and teacher interviews.

A district strategic plan was developed in collaboration with stakeholders and approved by the school board. It includes the district vision, mission and values as well as further definition of expectations in four specific areas: student achievement, human resources, financial management and safety. Individual schools have developed school improvement plans (SIP) that align with the district strategic plan. Teachers, principals and parents, particularly those who serve on the School Advisory Committees (SAC), were extensively involved in development of the SIPs. District divisions and departments have also developed operational plans and performance metrics to support school, division and district goals in these same four areas.

The district has compiled and maintains an extensive profile of student and community data for use in guiding instructional decisions. Profile data are compiled and posted on the district website. Individual school websites provide further disaggregation of specific data pertaining to the performance of students within each school. Interviews with district and school-based staff members indicate that the district is continuously engaged in finding ways to provide student performance data efficiently and in a most helpful manner for teacher and administrator use in making instructional decisions that result in improved student performance. Goals are established, quarterly benchmark reporting of progress toward meeting those goals takes place and results drive development of teacher Individual Professional Development Plans (IPDP). The result is a systematic process that aligns IPDP professional development to the SIP goals that are aligned with and support accomplishment of the goals identified in the district strategic plan.

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

- The district has identified vision and mission statements that provide clear priorities and direction to all faculty, administrators and departmental staff.
- Evident throughout the district is a professional commitment to the vision, mission and strategic planning goals established by the district.
- Systemic links are in place to tie district goals to school and classroom practices that focus on improved student achievement.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Provide multiple and ongoing opportunities for all stakeholders (internal as well as external) to shape the district vision and mission as they evolve.
- Develop the communication systems to reflect more accurately the specific vision targets for each goal area including timelines for meeting each objective.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Hillsborough County Public Schools has 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 district has written policies and procedures which are currently undergoing revision. These policies and procedures promote stability in the leadership and governance of the school district. This is evident through the longevity of the school board members and the superintendent, with the district having only four superintendents in the last four decades. The district organizational chart clearly defines lines of authority. Policies further define responsibilities, relationships and accountability, which support the district vision, mission and goals. The superintendent ensures compliance with applicable local, state and federal laws and regulations as evidenced by the annual Principal's Packet and the Hillsborough County School Board Policy Manual.

The seven-member board is elected to terms of four years. Board members complete required training and attend state and national conferences. The board and superintendent participate in unique team building activities that include organizational and individual analysis conducted by SYMLOG (SYstematic Multiple Level Observation of Groups) Consulting Group. This training provides the board and superintendent with comprehensive strategies and skills to analyze and improve social interaction systems on the individual, group and organizational levels.

The district builds public support, secures sufficient resources and acts as a good steward of those resources, which include multi-year grants such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Empowering Effective Teachers (EET) grant, bond issue, the Education Foundation and Parent Teacher Associations. The board requires legal financial reports and plans be submitted by departments. Resources are deployed to adequately support the district vision, mission and goals for improving student learning. The board requires adequate insurance be maintained to protect its financial responsibilities and resources. It meets the statutory amount of insurance, such as workers compensation, commercial general liability, errors and omission and educators practice liability. The board contracts for full legal counsel to advise on legal issues for the board and superintendent.

The superintendent is an energetic, visionary leader who is passionate about the academic improvement of all students. She is the executive leadership authority for implementation of board policies and procedures as referenced in board policy 3.01. As noted in the vision, the district strives to become the nation's leader in developing successful students. Surveys and interviews with the district staff, school personnel, parents and community leaders confirm that the superintendent's leadership has been a major asset as the district strives to make its vision a reality.

The district strategic plan was developed in a collaborative manner with commitment from district personnel. However, involvement of parents and other community members in the process for decision-making and goal-setting is limited. The strategic plan provides directions with a clear focus for the district to align, support and enhance all parts of the district in meeting organizational and student performance goals. Interviews with district-level staff members and school personnel, as well as review of the artifacts provided by the district and individual schools, indicate that there is alignment between the district strategic plan and individual school improvement plans.

Evaluating the district's effectiveness and its impact on student performance is accomplished by review of data from multiple sources, including the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT); National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP); end of course exams (EOC); Florida Assessment for Instruction in Reading (FAIR); and the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screening (FLKRS). These assessments promote the opportunity for information and remediation at several times during the school year and enable school personnel to make appropriate instructional decisions. Weekly, quarterly and annual achievement reviews validate that the district has a system in place to assess district goals. The results of the assessments are used to make decisions regarding professional development.

Evaluation of all employees is achieved through state mandated processes. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation recently awarded the district \$100 million for an innovative evaluation system called Empowering Effective Teachers, which is in the planning stages. All evaluations are closely tied to and aligned with professional development offerings.

The district creates and strengthens collaborative networks of community stakeholders to support student learning, ranging from parents to the corporate community. They collaborate using an array of forums such as town hall meetings, newsletters, websites, cross functional teams, parent-teacher organizations and the local media. The district further utilizes surveys such as the annual school climate and perception surveys to gather information on the overall effectiveness of the school district.

The district provides various ways for internal and external stakeholders to assume leadership roles and to contribute to the district's collaborative decision-making process. The minutes from the monthly Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings reveal that the CAC serves in an advisory capacity to the board and the superintendent. The district also receives input through the Citizens Concern Feedback Form, other community committees such as the Calendar Committee and a Contact Us page on the district website. The district has implemented a review protocol which allows an individual, organization or business entity to submit or request to interact with a school or schools.

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

- Tremendous respect for the superintendent exists across the district and throughout the community.
- Trust, respect and collaboration are evident throughout the entire school community.
- Although the current economic downturn has significantly impacted urban school districts throughout the nation, the superintendent's leadership in fiscal management has enabled this district to retain all instructional personnel.
- All district divisions operate with a strong sense of collaboration.
- The positive relationship between the board and the superintendent supports organizational effectiveness.
- Extensive professional development is provided to all employees, classified as well as certified.
- The award of a major grant to develop the Empowering Effective Teacher program is an outstanding achievement at the national level.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Establish protocols to include internal and external stakeholder groups in such meaningful processes as development and revision of the strategic plan and the vision and mission statements.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional," indicating that the Hillsborough County Public Schools has 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 district supports a broad curriculum based on clearly defined expectations for student learning and supported by district and area curriculum specialists. In addition, curriculum resources and pacing guides are provided to schools and use is monitored by district staff members using course outcomes measures for prekindergarten to grade 12. The district has taken a proactive stance in implementing the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards, utilizing pacing guides in combination with instructional focus calendars based on school achievement data to support student learning. Vertical and horizontal articulation occurs district-wide through regular meetings of district staff and administrators at all levels. In addition, the district provides transitional support to acclimate students to their next grade level. The data-driven culture allows curriculum revision at regular intervals as indicated by student success markers. The district is proactive in implementing state-level curriculum initiatives as necessary in all content areas. The district uses technology to support curriculum, inform decision making and facilitate communication and collaboration. Processes to ensure the equity of allocation of instructional technology were unclear.

The Florida Continuous Improvement Model (FCIM) is used to establish expectations and support student engagement. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) use coaching and mentoring to further facilitate the development of instructional strategies. Curriculum is designed to meet the needs of students and offer challenging application of their learning through such course offerings as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and Advanced Placement (AP) courses. In concert with the district vision of having the best educated students in the nation, a broad range of curricular options and approaches that addresses student needs and abilities are available to all. For example, AVID, Virtual School (K-12), EXCEerator, co-teaching, inclusion, instructional assistants, Extended Learning Program (ELP), and credit recovery opportunities are in place to meet students' diverse needs.

The use of data to guide district-wide curricular and instructional decisions is facilitated through the district's application of the Instructional Planning Tool (IPT). Formative and summative assessment results are monitored at all levels of the organization to assist in planning appropriate interventions and curricular changes to positively impact student achievement. Through this monitoring, the district has identified a significant gap in the reading and mathematics achievement of some NCLB student groups, although specific strategies to address these gaps are not in place. Data analysis further reveals a comprehensive writing program, as evidenced by positive FCAT results.

District resource teachers, content area supervisors and instructional coaches support research-based instructional methods. District staff members concentrate supervision and monitoring on identified focus schools, determining needed resources and direction for school improvement. School staff members consistently reported in interviews that district staff members and resources are readily available when requested. Schools graded A or B do not receive the same extensive monitoring and application of resources as focus schools unless they specifically request them.

A collaborative culture fosters a comprehensive professional development plan for building district-wide instructional capacity. Needs for professional growth are identified through district initiatives and through staff evaluations. Cutting edge training is offered in a variety of media, including face-to-face meetings,

school-based classes, online modules, area programs and small-group sessions. These options make professional growth opportunities match the schedule of the staff. Some staff members indicated, however, that communication about these offerings is not consistently available and that registration for some opportunities is closed before all staff members have opportunity to enroll.

The district employs Response to Intervention (RTI) facilitators to work with schools as they implement the requirements of the model. Data disaggregation is used to identify students in need of support and ensure that appropriate intervention takes place to foster student success.

The collaborative culture apparent at all levels of the organization supports a district-wide climate that promotes student learning. Data chats occur between all stakeholders, including district and school leadership, principal and teacher, teacher and student and parent.

Instructional time is appropriately allocated and protected. Student schedules are monitored to ensure maximum instructional time. Vertical articulation ensures that student transitions are supported from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school.

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

- Curriculum leaders maintain a concentrated effort to ensure principals are familiar with content pacing to facilitate monitoring of classroom instruction and fidelity to instructional focus calendars.
- The IPT and curriculum pacing guides support schools in dealing with high student mobility.
- PLCs are employed to support teaching and learning, providing a platform for teachers to work together to solve problems impacting instructional delivery.
- The district employs a comprehensive writing plan resulting in noteworthy writing achievement for all subgroups as evidenced by FCAT results.
- The wealth of meaningful professional development opportunities available to staff is praiseworthy. The high-quality follow-up activities required of workshop participants assists in the application of newly learned content and strategies.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Design and implement specific strategies to address and narrow the achievement gap.
- Establish a plan for monitoring the equitable allocation of instructional resources, including technology upgrades, to guarantee continued improvement for all schools.
- Monitor equal access to professional training to maintain the overall willingness of employees to participate in professional development opportunities.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Hillsborough County Public Schools 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:

Through interviews with staff and stakeholders, observations and review of artifacts, the QAR team found evidence that multiple and diverse assessments are administered in all subjects and grade levels, providing data that can be used throughout the year to support student learning. School staffs work with central office staff to summarize, analyze and use assessment results to inform instructional and operational decisions.

In addition to administration of required state assessments, the district has been a leader in Florida in the development of local end-of-course tests, with their assessments being used in other school districts in the state. The district is considering additional assessment programs, but concern was raised that this will severely impact instructional time in light of the amount of time currently allocated for testing.

National tests are included as part of the district assessment system. The Pre-Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) is provided at no cost to all 9th grade students, and the district provides test administration fees for a single administration of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the American College Test (ACT) for each student in grade 11 or 12. All students in grades one through three are administered the Stanford 10 achievement test. The district plans to initiate participation in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Trial Urban District Assessment Project (TUDA), which will provide the district with NAEP results for the district and enable them to compare performance of their students with other large schools districts participating in the program.

School staff members reported that they use results from formative benchmarks and progress-monitoring assessments for placement of students. Within PLCs, decisions are made to adjust instruction in response to analysis of results. The district follows state requirements for use of results (i.e., providing remediation to level one students in reading by assigning them to a 90-minute reading class).

District office staff members evaluate school data, identifying key points, strengths and areas for growth. These district leaders have focused discussions with school leadership teams on areas of concern related to performance of their students. One full day at the beginning of each school year is dedicated to the analysis and synthesis of school-level data by school-level staff members. Results are used to develop individual professional development plans and school improvement plans. District-level staff members also analyze district-wide data to determine professional development needs and to determine goals and objectives for the strategic plan. Data analysis is also used to evaluate some programs, but this practice is inconsistent across the district.

The district employs innovative technology to provide current data to guide instruction through the Instructional Planning Tool (IPT). This tool summarizes individual student demographic information, school enrollment history, current class schedules, transcript grades, credit summary, three years of FCAT results and results from college admission exams. In response to requests from teachers, results from the district's formative assessments have been added to the IPT. This information is used at the classroom level, allowing teachers to plan instruction to meet the needs of each student. While these data and trend analyses are widely available to district and school personnel, communication of these results to the public

occurs only through public media, such as newspaper reports, the state report card and varied school sharing sessions.

The district is in the planning stages for implementation of the Empowering Effective Teachers grant, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and matched by district funds. This process will train mentors to work with teachers and will revamp the current teacher evaluation process to include peer and mentor evaluations as well as administrative evaluations and will award pay based on student performance. Participation for current employees will be voluntary, but newly hired employees will automatically be evaluated using this system. The majority of staff members interviewed related positively to the project, although many expressed a lack of available information about the process.

The gathering of perception data at the school and district levels includes a school climate survey. Other surveys are administered to guide district divisions, helping them evaluate and modify their work.

Staff members in the assessment and accountability office report results annually on SAT and other measures, comparing district results with those of the largest school districts in Florida as well as surrounding counties. The state provides results for all districts which enables this district to compare results on the FCAT, SAT, ACT, and AP classes to any other school district. Further communication of student progress at the secondary level occurs through the website's parent portal Edline. Parents can access this password-protected site to see their student's grades, attendance and assignments.

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

- The district assessment system consists of both formative and summative data that are used to support the district vision.
- Assessment results are delivered in a timely manner and in a useful form.
- The IPT provides a variety of student information that is used at the classroom and school levels.
- By implementing the Edline tool at the secondary level, the district has begun work to be thorough and transparent in communicating information about students to their parents.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Create and implement processes to make assessment results and trend data (i.e., FCAT, AP, SAT, graduation rate) more readily available to the public.
- Communicate clearly the information about teacher evaluation in the Empowering Effective Teachers initiative to district staff and the public.
- Analyze carefully proposals for additional assessments to ensure that they do not obligate additional instructional time.
- Investigate the use of Edline for elementary schools.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional," indicating that the Hillsborough County Public Schools 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:

Interviews with educational leaders as well as certified and classified staff members along with review of artifacts indicate that the district ensures all teachers and support staff are recruited, placed and trained through an efficient and deliberate process. This recruitment includes job fairs, college visits, working with other districts experiencing declining enrollment and traditional on-line opportunities. Instructional applicants are required to take the Haberman Assessment Survey prior to activating their application. Candidates for support positions participate in a pre-screening process before moving forward in the hiring process. These processes ensure that applicants are placed in the areas that best utilize their strengths.

The district expends concentrated effort to assign professional and support staff to the position for which they are highly qualified, as indicated through a review of artifacts and QAR team interviews. Over 94% of the professional staff meets the federal definition of highly qualified. While diversity is evident among school staffs, the QAR team observed that the school and district administrative staffs are not reflective of the demographics of the district.

Once placed, instructional staff are provided an on-site mentor and participate in the Preparing New Educators program. Support personnel are provided the opportunity for training by their division to enhance their skills and opportunities. New administrators are offered opportunities in areas of need and through the Preparing New Principals program.

Instructional staff members may participate in several performance pay initiatives as part of their evaluation. If eligible, they may choose involvement in the Merit Award Program (MAP), Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF), pay for performance or remain in the traditional salary schedule. The Empowering Effective Teachers program is being developed to provide innovative support for teachers to enhance instruction in the classroom and receive pay based on student and teacher performance.

Interviews with the business office staff, review of artifacts and the Standards Assessment Report (SAR) indicate that the district is financially stable. Despite the current economic situation in the nation and the state of Florida, the district has been able to function without layoffs or furlough days. As stated by the superintendent, the chief finance officer and school board members, this has been possible only through prudent and visionary budget management that began as early as 2005. Teachers and school principals throughout the district praised district leaders for the continued support of resources, professional development and human capital. In its most recent audit cycle, the district received a Moody's rating of Aa3, S&P rating of AA, and improved its Fitch rating to an A+.

Business office personnel shared that they have saved over \$100 million in the past two years through the purposeful allocation of services and supplies along with salary savings through the replacement cycle of district office personnel. In 2005 the school board passed a policy that specifically states the district must maintain a 5% balance of the yearly budget as a contingency fund. Documentation in the SAR and interviews with the district leadership revealed the district also actively pursues grants to enhance current programs and implement innovative practices. This special revenue amounts to 8.4% of the current budget. Recently the district received a seven year, \$100 million Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant

to be used for the Empowering Effective Teachers program.

As evidenced through interviews, professional development provides both strengths and challenges for the district. A plethora of staff development options are available for school personnel. These are offered online, at schools and at other designated sites. Stipends are available for some offerings, but many offerings quickly fill up, which frustrates many teachers and limits participation. The schedule for professional development provides multiple and diverse opportunities for participation, including after school, during the day, online at the convenience of the participant and weekends. To further meet the needs of the teachers, afternoon workshops were changed to begin at 5:00 P.M; however, some teachers are not aware of the change in time. Inconsistent communication about some workshops was expressed as a concern, with some teachers unaware of many of the offerings in the district. Each workshop is evaluated by the participant at its conclusion. Participants in identified projects submit follow-up information to describe their classroom implementation of skills learned in the professional development activity. Selected workshop information is forwarded to principals to assist their monitoring of participants' implementation of skills and processes.

The district cleans and maintains more than 250 sites with a staff of roughly 1,600 custodians and between 200 and 300 maintenance and mechanical staff. Observations and interviews indicated that the sites are clean and well-maintained, with maintenance requests handled quickly. Facility condition assessments are performed regularly, and a five-year plan details anticipated facilities maintenance and renovation needs. Throughout the district, older facilities are typically not demolished and are instead refurbished with the guidance of district architectural staff and the strategic plan. In an effort to improve services, stakeholders are surveyed annually regarding facility conditions and awards are given for the cleanliness of sites.

Interviews and observations revealed that safety and security are high priorities in the district. Sign-in and visitor policies are universally enforced, and the district employs security personnel and contracts with local law enforcement to provide additional security at certain sites. Emergency drills (i.e., tornado, fire, intruder on campus) are regularly conducted and documented. The district's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) provides a template for the site-level crisis management plans that are updated annually. However, the hardcopy of the CEMP was last updated in July 2004 and an updated electronic version was produced in September 2007.

On-site observation at schools and work sites revealed a mixture of up-to-date and older technology. The district technology plan contains a "refresh" plan that specifies the manner in which technology will be upgraded on a rotating basis in various schools and worksites. The QAR team noted that the technology infrastructure is generally adequate but is insufficient in terms of equitability among all schools.

A review of artifacts, observations and interviews with stakeholders affirms that the district provides and coordinates support services that include health, psychological, social, guidance, co-curricular, transportation, nutrition, homeless children, hospital and homebound, alternative learning and migrant education. Information regarding these services is available in both English and Spanish. The student support services are dynamic in reaching all students and are well-coordinated with the school, home and community. The district, in collaboration with a faith-based organization, provides a range of support services to a school that educates homeless children. The social work services provide linkages between the school, family, and community agencies that help families access medical, mental health, and social welfare programs.

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

- The district uses a detailed and rigorous employment application process.
- The district used foresight in budgeting activities in order to survive the current economic downfall

and is proactive in its established contingency fund.

- The district offers a plethora of professional development using a variety of delivery systems, offering stipends for some.
- Facilities are clean and well-maintained.
- Safety and security are high priorities in the district.
- District-wide technology standards are in place for the acquisition of hardware and software in order to minimize problems of compatibility and stress upon the technology infrastructure.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Create and implement a plan to sustain programs that are currently grant-funded as grant cycles end.
- Update communication and registration processes for professional development activities to ensure equity in registration and participation district wide.
- Develop a plan to better align district and school leadership staff with the diverse demographics of the district.
- Update the district CEMP regularly.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional," indicating that the Hillsborough County Public Schools 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:

Communication and relationships with and among various stakeholders are robust. District, school and community stakeholders make concerted efforts to ensure that all parents and guardians understand and support the educational efforts focused on improving student learning. During the accreditation visit, the QAR team met with members from the following stakeholder groups: district and school personnel, students, business and community, School Advisory Council and parents and guardians. Interviews with these groups, along with review of various artifacts, verified that communication, collaboration and shared leadership is evident among all stakeholders and is focused on high expectations for teaching, learning and fostering positive relationships. All indicators point to the fact that current effective communication procedures in the district and at schools are valued by all district stakeholders.

The district utilizes a variety of district-wide strategies to listen to and communicate with stakeholders, including an award-winning website that contains a multitude of general information about school and district programs and practices. Through the website, the public has access to web-based programs, including but not limited to Parent Link and EdLink which offer parents and guardians opportunities for increased communication and portals to monitor student progress through the Internet. The district also uses a number of traditional communication practices including school councils, parent and teacher conferences and multiple customer satisfaction surveys.

The district solicits the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance the work of the system. The board and superintendent participate in many school and community events. In addition to regularly scheduled monthly meetings, they host multiple Town Hall meetings and give interviews on Spanish radio in an

effort to disseminate important information to as many stakeholders as possible.

Principals and school-based personnel remarked in interviews that district leaders are always available for them when any need arises. School leaders and staff members are highly supportive of the district-level proactive monitoring and resource allocations to focus schools and those schools rating a C or below. Those schools rating an A or B who request help are promptly provided support to meet their needs; however, if an A or B school does not request district assistance, they are left alone. School tours and classroom observations manifested the fact that the district has the understanding and support of their stakeholders.

Student learning expectations are consistently and effectively communicated with students, parents and guardians, teachers, administrators and community members through a variety of both print and electronic avenues (i.e., e-mail, student handbooks, an informative school and district website, special events such as college night, parent and guardian conferences, EdLink, School Advisory Council meetings, open houses, board meetings, school newsletters and local newspapers). Through participation on teams to develop the strategic plan, vision and mission, area stakeholders gain authentic knowledge of the priorities of the district. These elements are posted on the district website as well as included in publications and public meetings. Learning standards are public knowledge as the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards are applied. Information is shared with the public in a variety of formats, ranging from face-to-face Town Hall meetings to technology-driven models like pop-up e-mails from the superintendent to webinars and video links. Communication from school to home includes traditional backpack newsletters and the phone message system. All communication is provided in both English and Spanish. An example of this is the use of the Spanish radio by the board chair to share information to the Hispanic families.

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

- A professional, trusting environment is cultivated in the district. As expressed by multiple stakeholders, “Although we are a large district, we function like a small district.”
- Parents and guardians are given a variety of options for programs and school designs, and they report feeling very welcome at the schools.
- A strong collaborative culture in the district facilitates continuous improvement, beginning with the district leadership and continuing to the parents and community members.
- A variety of communication media is used to share information with district employees and parents and guardians.
- The district website is highly developed and kept current with a rich collection of information for employees and the community.
- Surveys are conducted regularly to provide a means of collecting input on a variety of issues.
- Strong ties to the community result in volunteers, mentors and business partnerships that support the school mission.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Implement additional communication formats in addition to web-based communication to reach the 50% of families that do not have Internet access.
- Introduce a systematic process to monitor, evaluate and increase stakeholder dialogue with all schools, regardless of their grade or focus designation, to determine fidelity to program implementation, resource needs and effectiveness of student achievement.
- Create and implement strategies to be inclusive of hard-to-reach parents or guardians by understanding the challenges of parents and guardians who work more than one job or work evenings. The district and the schools should continue to build parent involvement opportunities.
- Involve parent and guardian input in district-level committees, task force groups, Strategic Plan development and future Standards Assessment Reports. Although the survey system provides some

streams of communication, personal attendance at the district level would enrich the decision-making process.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Hillsborough County Public Schools 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 district is committed to continuous improvement. An exceptional and systemic sense of efficacy is focused on improving student achievement. All stakeholders interviewed articulated that decisions are based on what is deemed best for students. This focus sincerely echoes the vision and mission of the district. The district strategic plan guides the actions of district stakeholders to focus on student achievement. The plan was developed with school and district stakeholder involvement. The plan aligns with the AdvancED standards and has embedded key focus areas of the Empowering Effective Teachers program and integrated measurable goals for each division in the district. Additional emphasis on continuous improvement is seen in the district-wide AdvancED Standards Assessment Report (SAR) process. Each school involved stakeholders reflecting the district's process of self-evaluation through an online SAR. These reviews were examined by district staff and conversations with schools supported the use of findings in the school improvement process.

Schools receive intensive training during the summer and throughout the school year to provide guidance in developing their SIPs. All schools engage in a peer review process to strengthen their SIPs. Data analysis is accomplished by school staff members as a whole and through PLCs both formally and informally structured to determine expectations for student learning. Schools include community and parent representatives in the development of their SIPs. Collaboration among district and school administrative personnel is ongoing, supporting the positive climate expressed by stakeholders district-wide. All SIPs are aligned with the district vision and mission and are approved by the school board. Both the strategic planning and the SIP processes reflect a thorough analysis of district and school profiles, using thorough data analysis processes to determine strengths and needs of the district and schools and use these to develop goals and strategies to have the greatest impact on student achievement. Data analyses identify gaps of achievement and performance between subgroups; however, consistent, district-wide strategies to address these gaps are not evident.

Multiple and diverse improvement strategies and instructional initiatives are implemented at the school level, but these are inconsistent across the district and lack systematic monitoring for fidelity of implementation. Program evaluation is limited in scope and location. Effective practices, including RTI and PLCs, occur in "pockets of excellence," but these exemplary implementations are not shared to make practices consistently outstanding across the district.

The district communicates results of improvement efforts in both formal and informal venues. Individual student results on state and local testing are distributed to parents and are available through the parent

portal on the district's website. Student progress is further communicated through term progress reports. Analyses of state and national assessments are distributed through newspaper reports, on the district and school state report cards and on the website. Thorough data analyses are available through the IPT for use at the district, school and classroom levels. However, community stakeholders and parents interviewed by the QAR team were unaware of the district's progress on its improvement efforts.

Topics for professional development are identified through data analysis and aligned with goals from the strategic plan to help personnel achieve improvement goals. School-based activities reflect specific needs of the school community while district level offerings address more global improvement goals. Professional development offerings cover a wide spectrum of topics and are offered as needed by individual teachers, small groups or entire district cohorts. Scheduling for professional development opportunities includes after school, online, weekends and during release time, making these available literally around the clock. The district plans to expand the offerings and scheduling of professional development, providing a broad array of opportunities for all district staff. Based on data collection and analysis, the schools identify trends to set goals and develop their school and individual professional development plans. Professional development is purposefully designed to build the capacity of district and school leadership, instructional and support staff. Most importantly, professional growth is comprehensively aligned to the strategic objectives of the district and the effectiveness of individual staff members.

In addition to daily scheduled planning time, teacher planning days are provided twice a month through early release days for students. Principals stated that providing two half days per month causes increased student absences on the mornings of the early release days, limiting their ability to provide much needed instructional time. Principals also requested better alignment of the district calendars to eliminate overlap of planned activities. Parent input indicated that the early release days create a hardship for them with child care and other concerns.

School leadership and staff reflected through interviews that district support is readily available to sustain improvement efforts. In focus schools and those rating a grade of C or below, the district is proactive in monitoring improvement efforts and suggesting resources to maintain those efforts. In schools rated A or B, the district readily responds to specific requests for assistance, but a systematic monitoring and review of these schools' improvement efforts occur only when student achievement results are available.

The district strives to engage hard-to-reach parents and stakeholders through English Language Learner programs, Parent Resource rooms and the support of Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) funding. Secondary school sites have been included as recipients of NCLB funding to supplement much needed services at Title I schools. Additional staff, teacher, parent resources and equipment are provided by the NCLB federal grants and other departments promptly as evidenced by input from principals, teachers, parents and district staff.

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

- The district vision and mission are highly visible in each school and are the driving force behind each school's improvement plan.
- On-going analysis of data encourages close monitoring of initiatives, especially its professional development and the impact of the continuous improvement process.
- The district has begun initiatives to improve student achievement among all student groups.

Opportunities - The team offers the following opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Empower schools to address their individual needs within their school improvement plan while adhering to district, state and federal requirements.

- Monitor implementation and execution of initiatives such as RTI and PLCs to ensure their consistent development and fidelity.
- Establish internal processes to share identified best practices and effective implementation of initiatives within and among schools in areas and across the district.
- Disseminate information concerning professional development offerings consistently to ensure all appropriate staff members have adequate opportunity to enroll.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Hillsborough County Public Schools 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

Quality assurance is demonstrated through data that recognize increasing student achievement. The comprehensive district plan for continuous improvement relies on leadership that conducts monthly meetings with each school to identify growth needs as reflected in their school improvement plans. The strategic plan is applicable down to the classroom level by directors that meet with human resources, finance, student services, federal programs and curriculum and instruction divisions to discuss each school. District staff members recognize the need to provide assistance to buildings and sustain support even after schools show marked improvement.

Clear alignment of the strategic plan and the individual school improvement plans focuses continuous improvement efforts on the district vision and mission. Through this alignment, processes and resources can be more effectively deployed to support student achievement across the district.

The district holds the schools accountable by district-created assessments, and formative assessments are in place to gather data and continue to inform instruction. The data dashboard system of the IPT allows the district to see where they need to move. As data come to the district level, they are collectively analyzed and disseminated back to the building and classroom levels. Area directors provide support for principals (i.e., instructional leadership and resource management). All administrators examine key performance areas, analyze the data, and create the data dashboard which can be accessed at the school and classroom levels. Instructional coaches are put in place when need is indicated, such as a decrease in achievement. Coaches meet monthly, are assigned to buildings and provide monitoring and training. A follow-up of the training and professional development is recognized through surveys and classroom walk-throughs conducted by the principals who observe and identify trends. The district is exploring improved technologies to create scorecards that will give staff members a user friendly dashboard for all data needed to inform instruction.

Area directors evaluate and guide principals in leadership development. Supervisors work with the principals on curriculum, instructional practices and assessment. When data indicate the need for improved performance by teachers, content supervisors meet at the building level to support staff members with professional development to make improvements and instructional coaches support classroom teachers.

District professional development for teachers is pursued for improved practice in the classroom. Evening and weekend staff development classes are held. Additional improved technologies are being investigated for blended on-line learning for professional development.

The district established a process for each school to conduct an internal SAR based on AdvancED's model to assess their capacity for meeting each of the seven standards. These SARs were reviewed by district personnel and used constructively in the development of each school's improvement plan.

Strengths

- A large variety of devices is used to regulate, measure, monitor and document district academic and managerial improvement.
- The district central and region office personnel and building principals use effective data dashboards, differently designed and appropriate for each, that allow them to monitor schools or the school for which they are responsible with curriculum, attendance, testing and teacher information.
- Regular reviews of the district's academic and organizational performance and effectiveness occur through effective cross-functional teaming at all levels of the district that convenes both frequent regularly scheduled and ad hoc meetings.
- The district created the Online Assessment Tool correlated to the AdvancED's seven standards, thus ensuring that all school personnel considered and reflected upon their content.

Opportunities

- Identify a human resources process to monitor and align the instructional staff to proportionately reflect the demographics of students district-wide. Implementing a process that will increase diversity of instructional staff to reflect the students they serve will provide the landscape for improved student achievement among NCLB AYP subgroups historically underperforming, increased community relations and ultimately provide a systematic process for developing instructional and administrative staff reflective of district demographics.
- Develop a formal process to review all program initiatives that will serve as a district framework for program reviews organized around a timeline and minimum standards for program continuation. The development of a formal process will enhance the district's current system of program reviews, identify implementation gaps quickly, improve the overarching efficiency of program implementation and provide a framework for stakeholders at all organizational levels to have knowledge and input on discontinuing ineffective initiatives.
- Institute a quality assurance method, such as an internal peer review. This example involves establishing a process where teams of educators visit each other's schools and provide them with quality feedback. Instituting such a quality assurance method may provide an effective form of professional development, serve as a means to provide all schools with meaningful feedback, present all schools with an opportunity to showcase their learning environment and demonstrate how they work together. Additionally, teachers noted the satisfaction and learning that comes from visiting other schools, observing teachers teaching, collaborating with colleagues and learning with and from each other. This approach supports PLCs and Empowering Effective Teachers initiatives.

Conclusion

The commendations and required actions 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 required actions 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 required actions 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 required actions.

The Quality Assurance Review Team expresses appreciation to the district leadership, members of the professional staff, students, parents and other community representatives for hosting the review team. The team wishes the district and its students much success in the quest for excellence through NCA-CASI-PS accreditation with AdvancED.

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Dr. Nikki Armato, Chair (AdvancED)
- Dr. Alvin White, Vice Chair (ABA Consulting & Recruiting LLC)
- Dr. Patti Thomas, Vice Chair (N.B. Cook Elementary School)
- Dr. Denise Jennings, Vice Chair
- Mrs. Sandra Edwards, Team Member (Escambia County School District)
- Ms. Shirley Joseph, Team Member (Madison County School District)
- Stephen Martin, Team Member (Caldwell County School System)
- Larry Woods, Team Member (Lincoln County Public Schools)
- Mrs. Teresa Wright, Team Member (Brevard County School District)
- Dr. James Brown, Team Member
- Mr. Randall Cook, Team Member (Lee County School District)
- Tracy Perkins, Team Member
- Dr. Mandy Offerle, Team Member
- Dr. Ruth Jacoby, Team Member (Somerset Academy, Inc.)
- Dr. Steven Jordahl, Team Member (St. Cloud Area School District 742)
- Mr. Bruce King, Team Member (Monroe County School District)
- Mr. Daniel Craig, Team Member (NCA CASI Oklahoma State Office)
- Dr. Dena Dossett, Team Member (Jefferson County Public Schools)
- Ms. Diane Fleming, Team Member (Detroit Public Schools)
- Dr. Drew Moore, Team Member
- Dr. Eveleen Lorton, Team Member (University of Miami)
- Mr. Gary Kirsch, Team Member (Jensen Beach High School)
- Dr. George Koonce, Team Member
- Dr. Jacquelyn Clency, Team Member (Indianapolis Public Schools)
- Dr. James Doud, Team Member (Univ. of Florida)
- Ms. Jerri-Lyn Burns, Team Member (Palm Beach County School District)
- Mr. John Clarke, Team Member (Cardinal Newman High School)
- Dr. Joseph Hill, Team Member (duluth Public Schools)
- Dr. Kathy Wills, Team Member
- Dr. Ken Jarnagin, Team Member (Hoover City Schools)
- Mr. Kenneth Manuel, Team Member (FL SACS CASI)
- Mr. Floyd Henry, Team Member (Lake Shore Middle School)
- Mr. Lex Carswell, Team Member (Columbia County School District)
- Mrs. Brenda Hawkes, Team Member
- Dr. Adria Griffin, Team Member (Jasper County School System)
- Dr. Robert Rodosky, Team Member (Jefferson County Schools)
- Mark Klimesh, Team Member (Chicago Public Schools)
- Ben Perez, Team Member
- Dr. Dody Sapp, Team Member (AdvancEd Field consultant)

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.