

**Report of the
Quality Assurance Review Team
for
Wahoo Public Schools**

2201 North Locust
Wahoo, Nebraska, United States 68066

Mr. Galen Boldt, Superintendent

Review Dates: 02/23/2011 - 02/24/2011



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

Quality Assurance Review Report

Contents

About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI	3
Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review	4
Summary of Findings	5
Commendations	5
Required Actions	6
Next Steps	7
Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools	9
Standard 1. Vision and Purpose	9
Standard 2. Governance and Leadership	10
Standard 3. Teaching and Learning	11
Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results	12
Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems	14
Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships	15
Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement	16
Conclusion	18
Appendix	19
Quality Assurance Review Team Members	19
AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools	19

About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

Background. Founded in 1895, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) accredit public and private schools and districts in 30 states, the Navajo Nation, Latin America, and the Department of Defense Schools worldwide.

In April 2006, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) came together to form one strong unified organization dedicated to education quality. That unified organization, known as AdvancED, creates the world's largest education community, representing 27,000 public and private schools and districts across the United States and in 65 countries worldwide and educating 15 million students.

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

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

- 1) Meet the AdvancED Standards and Policies for Quality Schools.** Schools demonstrate adherence to the AdvancED standards and policies which describe the quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for schools to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness.
- 2) Engage in continuous improvement.** Schools implement a continuous improvement process that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing (vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community (profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (results).
- 3) Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review.** Schools engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, schools host an external Quality Assurance Review Team once every five years. The team evaluates the school's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and required actions to help the school improve. The team provides an oral exit report to the school and a written report detailing the team's required actions. The school acts on the team's required actions and submits a progress report following the review.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI accreditation engages the entire school community in a continuous process of self-evaluation and improvement. The overall aim is to help schools be the best they can be on behalf of the students they serve.

Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

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

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

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

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

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

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

Using the Report - Responding to the Required Actions. The school uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The school is held accountable for addressing the required actions identified in the report. The NCA CASI/SACS CASI State Office is available to assist schools in addressing the required actions. At prescribed intervals, the school must submit a progress report detailing the actions and progress the school has made on the team's required actions. The report is reviewed at the state and national level to ensure the school is addressing the required actions.

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

Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the NCA CASI Nebraska State Office (NCA-CASI-NE), a division of AdvancED, visited the Wahoo Public Schools in Wahoo, Nebraska, United States on 02/23/2011 - 02/24/2011.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 12 members of the administrative team, 32 students, 14 parents, and 33 teachers. In addition, Support Staff were interviewed. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the school. Specifically, the team examined the school's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

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

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

Through its examination of the school's adherence to the standards, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following commendations and required actions.

Commendations

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

- **The staff and leadership demonstrate strong commitment to student success.**

Interviews with students and community stakeholders all yielded strong beliefs that the staff and administration of the school cared deeply about the success of the students, both personally and academically. Students and parents commented on the fact that teachers were willing to spend time both before and after school to help students. Interviews provided evidence that the school board and administrative staff were deeply invested in student success and that was the foundation of their educational efforts. The smaller school size allows staff and administration to develop a relationship with each student that is of benefit to student development. The implementation of programs such as Wahoo Educational and Behavioral Support System (WEBSS) demonstrates a focus on assisting students who struggle.

The commitment and involvement of the staff and administration fosters a strong learning environment and

a willingness to improve for the benefit of the students. The dedication of the staff will continue to foster strong community support for school initiatives.

- **The Wahoo community demonstrates strong community support and loyalty to the school.**

Interviews with parents and community members reveal a long-term commitment to the school. Interviews with stakeholders at all levels revealed a strong sense of enthusiasm and spirit for the school system. Multi-generations of various families have attended through the years, and this had developed into strong loyalty to the school. There are examples of parents who move back to the area so their children can attend school in Wahoo. Stakeholders state that they feel the school prepares students for life after high school, whether students attend college or enter a vocation. The community supports the school financially and is involved through booster clubs and attendance at events. The building of the new theater facility for use by the school and community highlights the relationship between the school and community. The Athletic Booster and Music Booster clubs receive support from the community both financially and through volunteer time.

The strong relationship between the school and stakeholders is noteworthy in this small community. This support and loyalty enables the school to continue to implement new programs and improve the educational experience.

Required Actions

In addition to the commendations, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following required actions for improvement. The team focused its required actions on those areas that, if addressed, will have the greatest impact on improving student performance and overall school effectiveness. The school will be held accountable for addressing each of the required actions noted in this section. Following this review, the school will be asked to submit a progress report on these required actions.

- **Develop and incorporate a systematic and systemic process for the analysis and use of data and its alignment with student performance.**

Wahoo Public Schools is rich in data. Interviews revealed that professional development for teacher understanding of data has occurred. Presentations are made to the school board about assessment results. The community is notified of assessment results through the newspaper, and parents receive communication through Power School and teacher communication. There is no evidence that a process is in place to analyze the data and to use the results to impact student performance. Data analysis is not consistently used by administrators and teachers to drive the development of professional development, classroom interventions, student placement and curriculum decisions. Observations and interviews revealed that some teachers are effectively using data, but it is not evident in all classrooms. Evidence does not exist that education about data interpretation occurs for all stakeholders in a timely manner.

A systematic and systemic approach to data analysis will enable the school to better meet the needs of all students. This analysis can validate current curriculum and instruction, as well as focus areas in need of improvement.

- **Conduct a systematic and systemic analysis of assessment tools and their use in impacting student achievement.**

Interviews and artifacts demonstrate that a wide variety of assessment tools are being used. Teachers use various individual classroom assessments, district assessments, and state assessments. Stakeholders at all levels commented on the amount of assessment that occurs and there was a general response that there may be too much assessment. Evidence does not demonstrate that there is a systematic and systemic process in place for determining the effectiveness of the assessment tools and their impact on student achievement. There is no evidence that analysis of assessment tools is used to inform decisions made in instruction and curriculum planning.

An analysis of the assessment tools and their impact on student achievement will allow the school system to determine the validity of the tools and focus on those assessment tools which have the greatest impact on student learning.

- **Develop a long-range, prioritized professional development plan aligned with identified improvement efforts.**

Artifacts and interviews show that the school is only in the beginning stage of professional development planning to address the identified needs of students. Little evidence was found that professional development is based on analysis of student data. The use of professional development time is not coordinated or consistent throughout the school. Research-based best instructional practices expected by each teacher have not been clearly identified, implemented, or monitored. Although teachers have common plan time and professional learning communities are in place, there is little evidence that this time is structured. Interviews from parents, community, teachers, and administration revealed a desire for more professional development time. Teachers did express that they were able to attend outside professional development activities, but there was little evidence that this information was shared and distributed with other staff in a purposeful manner.

A professional development plan will allow for focus at all levels during common plan time and professional learning community meetings. A systematic, purposeful plan also provides support and evidence for the necessity of professional development time throughout the school year.

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

Next Steps

The school should:

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

6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

Resources

AdvancED offers a range of resources to support your school as it acts on the findings in this report. The AdvancED Resource Network, available at www.advanc-ed.org/resourcenetwork, provides an online network of peer-to-peer practices, best practices, and resources and tools designed to help schools with their improvement efforts. Available any where, any time, the network can be queried for information on a variety of school improvement subjects. The AdvancED Research and Development division provides research, handbooks, and tools to assist schools with continuous improvement. In addition, your state office provides hands-on professional development and ongoing technical assistance. Contact your state office for more information on the range of resources available to you.

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the visit, the Quality Assurance Review Team submits an accreditation recommendation to AdvancED for state review and for action at the national level by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the school. Upon receiving its accreditation, the school should celebrate its achievement with the school community. The NCA-CASI-NE accreditation seals are available at www.advanc-ed.org/communicationskit for accredited schools and districts to post on their website and to use in school communications. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and lapel pins are also available and can be ordered from the website to help you share your accomplishment with your community.

Summary

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

Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

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

Standard 1. Vision and Purpose

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

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

The mission and vision of Wahoo Public Schools is clear, concise, and permeates the culture of district employees and stakeholders. "Developing capable and responsible lifelong learners" has been the mission statement since 2004 and reflects the focused leadership of the superintendent, the school board, the district's certified and classified staff, and its stakeholders.

Commitment to the vision was reinforced by data from interviews. Wahoo Public Schools prides itself on the spirit and enthusiasm of its staff and community support. The profile of Wahoo Public Schools is very detailed and complete in describing the school, students, and community. However, the vision needs to be systematically updated and revised to include collaboration with its stakeholders. Doing this would communicate the vision and purpose and build stakeholder understanding and support. The vision needs to guide the teaching and learning process and evidence does not exist that a system is in place to ensure this. Students, administrators, and staff stated that they all want academics to be as honored as athletics and updating the mission statement can provide this focus.

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

- The profile is detailed and up to date and provides a clear picture of the district and community.
- There is a strong support for making sure all students are successful.

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

- Revise the vision statement that was developed in 2004 in collaboration with stakeholders.
- Identify school improvement goals that support the new vision to guide the teaching and learning process.

Finding: Wahoo Public Schools has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 2. Governance and Leadership

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

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

Wahoo Public Schools is governed by a six member Board of Education. Interviews conducted with board members provided evidence of a cohesiveness and unity of vision, roles and responsibilities. Board members expressed a verbal understanding of the roles of the board as it sets policy with administration and staff. Policies and procedures are currently being reviewed to ensure the effective delivery of service and compliance with local, state, and federal laws. It was evident through interviews that the board of education is willing to work with constituents to build support for effective utilization of resources. Wahoo Public Schools is presently building a new fine arts center and comments during interviews expressed the board members working diligently with the public to gather this support.

The current superintendent has been in place for six months and is regarded as a collaborator. Interviews with staff and administrators provided anecdotal evidence of the superintendent's willingness to empower his team by providing them with opportunities to positively impact and shape meaningful system change. Interviews also indicated overwhelming public support for the board in relation to providing adequate stewardship to the schools. The entire district seems committed to continuous improvement through the monitoring of data around table discussions of progress. Statements from board members revealed they are kept abreast of school activities and are given information on student performance. Help in interpreting this data has been beneficial to Board members.

The district demonstrates a continued commitment to transparency in its process and engages stakeholders in communicating the vision and is looking for ways improve this process. The new superintendent is very supportive of the administration and staff while ensuring compliance with local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations. The focus has changed to a proactive instead of reactive approach.

Common planning time allows the opportunity for professional learning communities to collaborate and communicate, but evidence shows it is not used effectively. Teachers and students are given opportunities to lead in a variety of settings. The staff is aware that they need to do a better job of analyzing data and guiding them in the direction of teaching students. Opportunities for stakeholders are provided, but participation is a challenge. The staff is easily approachable and willing to listen.

In the past, time was allocated for professional learning communities utilizing an early release schedule. This practice was successful, but is not currently in the calendar. There are multiple options to implement this approach and this discussion should be raised again.

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

- There is strong evidence of an atmosphere of collaboration and respect between the governing board, the district, and the building level leadership teams.
- There is a shared commitment to clear understanding of respective roles and responsibilities of the board and superintendent.

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

- Provide stakeholders roles that promote ownership in the school's mission and vision.
- Develop an evaluation system that provides for the professional growth of all personnel.
- Conduct annual evaluations of all staff, including administrative staff, to support continuous improvement.
- Establish a regularly scheduled revision process for the Board of Education Policy Manual and clearly communicate with internal and external stakeholders.
- Allocate time for professional learning communities to be applied consistently across all grade levels.

Finding: Wahoo Public Schools has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

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

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

Wahoo Public Schools has developed and implemented a curriculum based on defined expectations for student learning. All staff have worked to align the curriculum through the Curriculum Mapper software and the newly revised state standards.

The school promotes active involvement of students in the learning process and includes opportunities for students to explore new learning experiences. A very comprehensive program of activities, co-curricular and academics are offered for students at all levels. These programs challenge each student to excel, reflect a commitment to equity, and demonstrate diversity. Instructional time is protected and used effectively to support student learning.

Staff are given opportunities for professional development in curriculum, assessment, data analysis and instruction through Professional Learning Communities (PLC), but these opportunities have not been applied consistently across grade levels. A professional development plan, systematically implemented across grade levels would allow the school to maximize the impact of the professional development investment in curriculum, instruction, data analysis and interventions. Observations and interviews show that currently, the PLC processes are handled differently across grade levels and as a result, pockets of teachers are implementing more effective processes than others.

Wahoo Public Schools monitors school climate and takes appropriate steps to ensure that it is conducive to student learning. Perceptual data were collected from all stakeholders and the data used to inform staff of needed next steps. The school provides comprehensive information and media services that support the curricular and instructional programs and ensures that all students and staff members have access to instructional technology. Multiple resources are in place including a comprehensive website and sufficient technology inside the school. Technology use appears to be stronger in some classrooms than others.

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

- The staff and leadership demonstrate a strong commitment to the support of comprehensive student learning for all students including opportunities for academic excellence, co-curricular activities,

community service, an alternative school setting, and opportunities not always found in a school of this size, e.g. K-12 foreign language.

- All staff members have spent time in curricular alignment, ensuring that the newly revised state standards are integrated into the local curriculum.
- Professional Learning Communities have been established so that all staff have opportunities to work and plan with colleagues in like subjects/grades, and on certain days in vertical teams across subject areas and grades.
- Staff members have opportunities to analyze assessment data and to have input into the school improvement goals.
- All staff members have opportunities for professional development in a variety of research-based practices, have had opportunities to practice the learned strategies in their classrooms, and discuss the impact of the strategies collaboratively.
- Teachers and administrators in the school willingly work with each other, sharing opportunities for innovative teaching and learning.
- Teachers in many of the grades work with students to establish classroom and individual learning goals for reading and mathematics. Immediate feedback is provided by online interim assessment and results discussed with students immediately.
- Many teachers in the school have embraced technology and have integrated it into the instruction in their classrooms.
- A school-wide language for instruction used across all grade levels is beginning to emerge.

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

- Develop a systematic and school-wide plan for professional development, including Professional Learning Communities (PLC) that encourage system-wide application of continuous curriculum review, assessment practices, and instructional strategies.
- Develop a plan for staff to have multiple opportunities for data analysis throughout the year, focusing on the data sets aligned to student performance goals.
- Establish a technology plan to align professional development and support of the integration of technology for instructional purposes across all grade levels and classrooms.

Finding: Wahoo Public Schools has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results

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

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

Wahoo Public Schools has established performance measures for student learning that yield reliable information. The school has developed a comprehensive assessment system that measures student progress, but staff, parents, and students indicated that the school tests too much. Not all staff members are aware of the purposes of the assessments or how they can be used to improve instruction. Since the school is transitioning with the rest of the state from one assessment system to another, it is important that the school review the assessments given at various times throughout the year, determine which ones should be

administered, and determine how they can best be used to support learning goals. A systematic and systemic process is not in place to aide stakeholders in understanding and evaluating data.

Observations and interviews show that some teachers are especially effective at using data for instructional purposes, and others are not. Some staff members are using the immediate results from online data to match against learning goals. Some staff effectively uses formative data by using student response system technology to “check for understanding.” Not all staff, however, have expressed comfort in using data to inform decisions about improving teaching and learning but indicate that they would like to be better skilled at doing this.

The school communicates the results of student performance and school effectiveness to their stakeholders through their school website, the state website and through the local media. The school publishes and uses both comparison and trend data in their evaluation and tracks growth in student performance in accord with state and federal regulations. Some stakeholders within the school have a solid understanding of the meaning of the data, but it is likely that other stakeholders such as parents and community members do not. All stakeholders should be provided information to increase their knowledge about data. Additional clarifying information about student results would be beneficial to the stakeholder groups not as familiar with test results or performance information.

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

- Wahoo Public Schools uses multiple assessments, and these assessment tools provide a great wealth of data. This is a significant improvement from several years ago when the school district did not have any assessments except those required by the state.
- Many staff recognize the different purposes of the multiple assessments throughout the year . Some assessments are diagnostic tools providing immediate feedback to students and teachers; some are locally developed assessments scored by the teachers themselves, and some are the required state summative tests.
- Staff members have had opportunities to review student performance data at some point in the year.
- Some teachers are working with their students to establish both classroom and individual student target goals, measuring them with interim online assessment, and analyzing where students stand in relation to individual and classroom goals.
- Some staff members “check for understanding” and assess/monitor student learning by using technology and student response systems. Wahoo Public schools is willing to provide these kinds of resources to support the comprehensive assessment system and data collection.

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

- Identify the assessment tools that are most useful in providing information about student learning, and eliminate those that are not being used or do not have an important purpose.
- Provide multiple opportunities throughout the year for all staff to be trained in understanding the assessment terminology and analyzing the data aligned to school improvement goals.
- Provide training for all staff through the consistently-applied Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in how to tie the results of the data analysis to appropriate instructional strategies.
- Use the results of the data analysis to determine or to inform progress on the continuous improvement goals.
- Provide training for parents and other stakeholders outside the school in how to interpret student performance data and assessment reports.
- Prepare and communicate clear and understandable data reports for the community and other

stakeholders.

Finding: Wahoo Public Schools has earned the overall assessment level of "Emerging" and has not met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems

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

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

Wahoo Public Schools provides sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources and services to support student achievement. The district recruits and employs qualified certified and support staff who are capable of fulfilling assigned roles and responsibilities. In our interviews, staff and students indicate there is adequate staff to meet the vision and purpose of the school. The district budgets sufficient resources to support its educational programs such as Wahoo Education and Behavior Support System (WEBSS), distance learning, and technology.

One concern that was shared during interviews was the High Ability Learner program is limited to certain grade levels. Differentiated instruction occurs in some classrooms, but may not give students of higher abilities enough of a challenge.

Interviews and artifacts reveal that a strategic professional development plan is not in place that addresses all staff - both certified and support. Professional development at all levels is necessary for the continuous growth of certified and support staff to keep up with the constant changes in education and to improve their effectiveness in the classroom.

Finances are regularly reviewed through audits and annual budget reports.

Students repeatedly commented how they feel safe being at school. The site is maintained by maintenance personnel as well as students who volunteer to earn points for incentive rewards. During walk-throughs, it is evident that as needs have changed over time so have the facilities at the school. For example, the district has purchased state-of-the-art exercise equipment for the fitness room. In addition, the district is also in the process of building a performing arts center that will be completed in the Fall of 2011. This will be available for public use as well as for school functions and activities. The school has a crisis management plan in place, but needs to be updated. The last staff development day focused on training for an intruder in the building.

There seems to be sufficient resources available for technology. It would be beneficial to students and staff if there was a comprehensive plan for the integration of technology and learning practices.

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

- Students, staff and community feel safe and comfortable in the school environment.
- Funds are available for staff to purchase necessary materials for their classrooms to better educate students and provide state-of-the-art facilities.

- Staff is highly qualified for the position they teach.

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

- Provide focused professional development opportunities for certified and classified staff to improve their effectiveness.
- Review and update the emergency crisis manual annually.
- Evaluate ways in which to meet the needs of high ability learners.

Finding: Wahoo Public Schools has earned the overall assessment level of "Emerging" and has not met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

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

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

Wahoo Public Schools fosters and enjoys collaboration with community stakeholders, and provides formal and informal channels to listen to and communicate with stakeholders. The support by the board, the community, and stakeholders is evident through interviews with stakeholders and the pride expressed in the community. The school solicits the knowledge and skills of its stakeholders to enhance the work of the school.

Perceptual data were collected from all stakeholders including the community, business members, parents, and students and were used in the goal setting and sharing. The school communicates the expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to all stakeholders through its website, the local media, and in these communications provides meaningful information about students, their performance, and school effectiveness. To enhance the effectiveness of school-community relations all stakeholder groups should be educated about the use of data and the importance of staff development to improve student achievement.

Wahoo Public Schools has taken some significant steps in communicating to and involving stakeholders. One of the most significant was to involve a large number of parents, students, and business owners in the Self Assessment Analysis for the Continuous Improvement visit. The results of the self assessment was then shared with total staff and discussed so that community expectations could be shared and school improvement goals could be strengthened with the input.

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

- Perceptual surveys were sent to students, parents, and community members and data collected and analyzed. The community holds the school, the staff, and the opportunities for success in the school in high esteem.
- Wahoo Public Schools maintains an impressive website that includes a significant amount of information, provides information through school newsletters, and parents expressed their appreciation to be able to communicate with staff members directly if the need arose.

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

- Provide opportunities for community and parent “data sessions” where stakeholders can learn more about and understand student performance data.
- Involve community member participation during professional development sessions so that stakeholders can see the value of teacher learning and its connection to student learning.
- Include community members and student representation on a Continuous Improvement Advisory Team.

Finding: Wahoo Public Schools has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

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

Staff is engaged in a process of continuous improvement that is aligned to school vision and purpose. The mission statement appears on the website and on some documents; however, the visitation team only observed the mission statement posted in the middle school pod area. Each group interviewed was able to articulate the essence of the mission.

Two goals are defined in the school improvement plan--improving student achievement in reading and in math. Surveys have been taken from various stakeholder groups in the school improvement process including parents, students, and teachers that includes a broad array of input from school safety to home-school relations. Agenda-driven meetings are held throughout the year by the School Improvement Advisory team. It was not evident that information from these meetings is shared with stakeholders.

Test results are posted in a concise format for access online by staff. Administration meets on occasion with staff during team meetings to discuss test results. Instructors, through shared plan time and in professional learning community sessions, regularly discuss findings and strategise interventions. Shared plan time is also used to ensure effective and consistent processes and best practices and helps to identify and target specific student needs.

Administration recognizes the importance of global implementation of professional development built on a common language and identifying what works to improve student achievement. Staff have been introduced to various professional development strategies including Harry Wong, PD360, and Marzano, but these approaches were in some cases started and never finished, or made available to some but not all. Staff who wish may check out materials to learn on their own, but there is no formal professional development plan that ensures consistency to address improvement strategies. Staff indicated that if they need training essential for their job, it is provided.

The school is developing a very workable model for achieving school improvement goals. Multiple data sources such as Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy

Skills (DIBELS), Nebraska State Assessments (NeSA), Terra Nova and others are used for assessing student progress. Putting student data into the hands of grade level/professional learning community teams is making significant progress toward analyzing data and developing strategies to improve student achievement. Some data on large-scale student progress is shared through the district website, local newspaper, and newsletters and test results to the home, though it was articulated that it may be difficult for some parents to interpret test results without some guidance.

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

- Wahoo Public Schools and its community are committed to changing the culture from reactive to proactive and have made significant strides in that direction.
- Programs, such as the Wahoo Education Behavior Support System (WEBSS) and other intervention programs, provide vehicles that help students through individualized need and goal setting toward school improvement goals.

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

- Include student, parent, and community stakeholders on the School Improvement Plan team.
- Provide purposeful professional development aligned to school improvement goals.
- Develop a continuous process for data analysis and communication of this data to stakeholders that is meaningful to these groups and informs improvement efforts.

Finding: Wahoo Public Schools has earned the overall assessment level of "Emerging" and has not met this standard for accreditation.

Conclusion

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

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

The Quality Assurance Review Team expresses appreciation to the School Administration, members of the professional staff, students, parents and other community representatives for their hospitality throughout the visit. The team wishes the school and its students much success in the quest for excellence through NCA-CASI-NE accreditation with AdvancED.

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Mrs. Kim Gangwish, CHAIR (Bellevue West High School)
- Ms. SuAnn Witt, VICE_CHAIR (Nebraska Dept of Education)
- Kimberly Graff, MEMBER (Gothenberg Elementary School)
- Dr. Pat Roschewski, MEMBER (Nebraska Department of Education)
- Mr. Kevin Riggert, MEMBER (Elkhorn Ridge Middle School)
- Mr. Mitch Kubicek, MEMBER (Dorchester Public School)

AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

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

Vision and Purpose

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

Governance and Leadership

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

Teaching and Learning

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

Documenting and Using Results

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

Resource and Support Systems

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

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

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

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

performance.