

Report of the
Quality Assurance Review Team
for
Ridgcroft School

Elton L. Winslow, Sr., Principal

Review Dates: 11/11/2008 - 11/12/2008



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

Quality Assurance Review Report

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About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

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

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

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

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

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

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

Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), a division of AdvancED, visited the Ridgcroft School in Ahoskie, North Carolina on 11/11/2008 - 11/12/2008.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed the Principal, 0 member of the administrative team, 34 students, 11 parents, and 17 teachers. In addition, 3 Support Staff were interviewed. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the school. Specifically, the team examined the school's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

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

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

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

Commendations

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

- **Stakeholders are active and involved in the total school program.**

Stakeholders volunteer in classrooms, support services, extra-curriculum and in fundraising activities. Business and organizations in area are supportive of the school.

A successful school must have the support of all stakeholders.

- **There is excellent communication with stakeholders.**

The stakeholders were very satisfied with the communications with the school. The school employs a variety of communications to the stakeholders--emails, letters, phone call, one-call system, newsletters and conferences. Responses to concerns are addressed in a timely manner. Teachers communicate frequently with

the parents. Stakeholders feel that they are well-informed about the school program.

Good communication between the stakeholders and the school is necessary for a successful school operation.

- **The alumni are exceedingly supportive of the school.**

The Alumni Association is very involved in the total school program through fundraising activities and volunteering services. Several alumni are members of the Board of Directors. Many of the students have parents that are alumni.

The support of alumni is critical to the success of a school.

- **The staff recognizes the importance of the collection and analysis of data to provide direction in curriculum revision and student assignment.**

Decisions are data-driven. A variety of data is used in making decisions on student placement and curriculum revisions. Assessments are used in grades K-2 in reading and math. National normed tests and End of Grade and End of Course Tests are administered in grades 3-12. Data is analyzed to determine strengths and needed improvements.

Data must be disaggregated and analyzed to make curriculum decisions.

- **The student body is enthusiastic regarding their attendance at Ridgcroft.**

The students stated that the school had high expectations and a challenging curriculum. The majority of the students are very involved in the athletic programs. Opportunities are available for the high school students to take honors, AP and college courses. The students at all levels believed that the teachers were one of the schools greatest strengths.

Students are extremely supportive of the academic and athletic programs and they believe that they are receiving a quality education.

- **The school has high expectations for students and offers a challenging curriculum that is age and grade appropriate.**

A challenging curriculum and instructional program ensures that the students are prepared for college. In order to provide for the academic needs of the students, college credit courses are available at the community college, Chowan University and through internet. An exceptional children's teacher is employed for the special needs students. Many programs and academic challenges are available at all grade levels.

A school must have high expectations and a challenging curriculum that accommodates the needs of all students to prepare for becoming lifelong learners.

- **The school has a dedicated and caring staff that constantly strives to meet the needs of all students.**

Interviews with students, parents and other stakeholders revealed that one of the greatest strengths of the school was the dedicated teachers. The teachers are committed to providing a challenging academic program for all students. Many of the teachers are alumni of the school or their families are alumni of the school. They share a vested interest in the success of the school and meeting the needs of all the students.

Dedicated, caring and committed teachers are essential for a successful academic program.

- **The vision and mission drive the total school program. The school administration, staff and Board of Directors have a genuine commitment to the school's vision and mission.**

The school program is aligned with the vision and mission of the school. Through interviews and observations, the team noted that the school is making concerted efforts to prepare the students to be successful in a global society.

The vision and mission of the school determines the direction of the school. All programs must be aligned to the vision and mission.

Recommendations

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

- **Provide staff development on differentiated instruction.**

In order to accommodate the needs of all the students, teachers need additional training in differentiated/individualized instruction. Students with special needs are mainstreamed and the instructional program must accommodate their needs.

Differentiated instruction must be implemented to meet the diverse needs of students. Training is needed before this instruction can be used successfully.

- **Provide structured and regular scheduled opportunities for senior student leadership.**

School clubs and organizations provide leadership opportunities for students. Clubs and organizations must be structured and regular meetings scheduled. The school has a Student Government Association that is inactive. This association is designed to communicate to and from the administration to the students. Excellent leadership opportunities are available through SGA.

Activate the SGA to provide dialog with the administration and students. Schedule regular meetings and involve students in leadership activities.

- **Research and develop a plan for teacher recruitment and retention.**

Teacher recruitment and retention is difficult. The school has experienced difficulty in recruiting and retaining teachers. Some benefits are provided for the school; however, the salaries are lower than state salaries.

A plan that includes the advantages of the school, such as small classes, is needed to market the school to prospective teachers

- **Consider the following changes in the Board of Directors By-Laws to include: Increasing the length of term for board members, selecting non-parents as board members, providing bi-annual board workshops on best practices in governance, and changing the name of "board members" to "trustees."**

All of the board members are parents. Selecting non-parents as board members will enhance the support and provide a great base of expertise. Extending the length of term will provide more continuity for the members, and workshops will keep them abreast of the best practices in governance. The name change delineates roles.

Implementing the changes in the By-Laws will provide greater support, expertise, continuity and current knowledge on governance.

- **Post the mission statement in all classrooms and on all public documents.**

The mission statement is posted in the building, but is not visible for students and stakeholders. The mission provides direction for the school, and the school program is aligned to the mission. Students need to internalize the mission. Printing the mission on public documents will reinforce the purpose of the school to stakeholders.

The mission provides direction for the total school program and should be visible to all stakeholders.

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

Next Steps

The school should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all stakeholders.

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

Resources

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

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the visit, the Quality Assurance Review Team submits an accreditation recommendation to AdvancED for state review and for action at the national level by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the school. Upon receiving its accreditation, the school should celebrate its achievement with the school community. The SACS CASI 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 recommendations noted in this report. Doing so will enable the school to advance in its quest for excellence and deepen the fulfillment of its mission for all students.

Standards for Accreditation

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

Standard 1. Vision and Purpose

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

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

Ridgcroft School is clear in its acceptance and implementation of its vision and purpose.

All of the school's constituencies accept and understand that the school is committed to an exemplary college preparatory education for all of its students. In accepting the college preparatory mission of the school, the stakeholders commend the school for using this vision and purpose to create students who will become successful in an ever increasing internationally competitive environment.

The school communicates this vision and purpose through an updated website which publicly announces its mission via the mission statement.

The curriculum and the total school program are aligned with the vision and purpose of the school. The vision provides direction for the school's goals and teaching-learning process.

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

The school uses sufficient data to describe more fully student academic and standardized testing performance.

There are active and integrated constituent committees which provide valuable feedback to the school.

There is strong parent input that is regarded as valuable by school personnel.

The administrative leadership values the input from various constituent committees such as the PTO, School Improvement Team, Academic Standards Committee and the Board of Directors.

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

Allow senior student leadership a formal avenue to work on developing contributions from the student body. The Student Government Association should have regularly scheduled meetings and serve as a liaison between the students and the administration. Students can develop and improve leadership skills through involvement in SGA.

Review and revise the school's vision and mission as needed. The school's vision and mission should be

reviewed periodically and changed as needed.

Post the mission statement in all classrooms and on all public documents. The school program is aligned with the vision and mission. The mission is posted in several locations; however, students and stakeholders need to be knowledgeable of the impact of the mission and vision of the school.

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

Standard 2. Governance and Leadership

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

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

The school has established appropriate roles for all involved in the governance and leadership of the school. There are policies and procedures in place that clearly delineate operation and governance parameters. School policies and procedures are public documents that are located on the school's website. School data and financial records are reviewed by the Board of Directors. The Headmaster's Summary and School Improvement Plan are made public upon approval by the Board of Directors and are announced via the school's website. School data and financial records are reviewed by the Board of Directors.

All policies, regulations and procedures are in compliance with local, state, and federal laws. School policies are developed and implemented for efficient school operation and continuous improvement. Stakeholders are involved in the development and implementation of policies.

The administrative staff supervises the extra-curricular activities and athletics. The school encourages students to participate in activities. The school has a large athletic program and excellent participation in sports.

The school uses a variety of data in making decisions. Standardized tests, local assessments and teacher judgment are used in making decisions for students.

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

The school's many constituent groups review policies and procedures often as a means for input and consideration, which allows for policies and procedures to be updated during the school year.

Updates and changes in school policy are effectively communicated by letter, email, or phone. The headmaster maintains an effective "open door" policy.

The efforts to expand technology on the part of the Headmaster and Board of Directors for students and teachers are recognized and should be encouraged.

The leadership of the Headmaster is a valued commodity among the school's constituent groups.

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

Consider revising of the By-Law of the Board of Directors to include:

- Expanding individual terms of the Board of Directors from three to four or five years with a waiting period before serving a second tenure.
- Allowing community leaders who are not parents but who are interested in supporting the school to become members of the Board of Directors.
- Studying the feasibility of becoming "Trustees" rather than Directors to enhance the understanding of the fiduciary responsibilities of the Board and to more clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities between board governance and administrative operation.
- Scheduling a bi-annual board workshop to stay abreast of governance's best practices.

Finding: Ridgecroft School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

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

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

The school uses the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and state textbooks as the basic curriculum. Adjustments have been made in the science curriculum. The school teaches earth science in the sixth grade, life science in the seventh grade and physical science in the eighth grade instead of a combination of the sciences each year. Pacing guides have been developed to ensure that all curriculum goals are taught during the school year. The mission of the school is reflected in the teaching-learning process.

Documentation, such as Reading Articulation in grades 3-12 and Writing Portfolios, is used to chart student's progress. Reading and math assessments are given to the students in grades K-2. Students in grades 3, 6, 9 and 11 take standardized tests, while students in 4, 5, 7 and 8 take the North Carolina End of Grade Tests. At the completion of Algebra I, Biology and English I the students take the North Carolina End of Course Test for these subjects. The test data is used for curriculum decision-making and monitoring student progress.

The school contains grades PreK-12 and is grouped into three levels—lower, middle and upper. Each level has scheduled meetings and transition and vertical meetings are arranged to ensure that students are prepared for the next level and provide vertical alignment of the curriculum. Good communication among the levels is ongoing.

The school has high expectation for all students and provides a challenging curriculum. Honors, advanced placement and college credit courses are provided. The Huskins Program and collaborative agreement with Chowan-Roanoke Community College provide opportunities for students to receive 18 semester hours of college credit in high school. The school also utilizes resources at Chowan University. Arrangements have been made for students to enroll in vocational-tech courses at the community college. Psychological services are provided by Hertford County Schools. An exceptional children's teacher is employed to provide appropriate instruction for identified students. All students in grade 9-12 are required to participate in community service projects.

Technology is integrated into the curriculum. The school has implemented a Student Management System for attendance and grades.

The faculty serves as mentors for new teachers. The size of the school is conducive to teaming among the faculty. A variety of methodology, such as STC Science Kits, hands-on activities and projects, is used. Varied teaching styles are used to accommodate the diverse learning styles of the students. Arrangements have been made for the teachers to observe their peers in classroom teaching settings.

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

The school offers a challenging curriculum and has high expectations for students.

The staff is committed to providing a quality education for all students.

Grant funding is used for technology, professional development and innovative programs.

The School Improvement Plan is frequently monitored and revised as needed.

Test data indicates good student achievement. The test scores are above state and national averages.

A concerted effort is made to upgrade technology.

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

Research and implement a plan for teacher recruitment and retention.

Focus on integrated curriculum, such as English and social studies, that connect learning and make it more relevant.

Support lateral entry teachers in pursuing certification.

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

Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results

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

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

The school has a comprehensive evaluation program that measures student achievement. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills is administered in grades 3 and 6 and in grades 9 and 11 the students take the Iowa Test of Educational Development. Students in grades 4, 5, 7 and 8 take the End of Grade Tests. These tests are aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. The Kuhlman-Anderson IQ Test is given to the students in grades 5 and 9 and the NC Computer Test is administered to all students in grade 8. In high school the End of Course Tests in Algebra I, English I, Biology, and US History, Advance Placement Tests, PSAT, SAT, ACT, Early Math Placement Test and ASVAB are given to eligible students. In grades K-2, the reading and math assessments are used. These assessments are administered by a special teacher.

The test data is disaggregated and used to chart student progress and also for curriculum revisions. Data is analyzed to monitor student growth from year to year and to determine the curriculum strengths and needed improvements. Decisions are data-driven.

In high school the guidance counselor schedules an individual conference with each student and discusses his/her test data, academic progress and college/ career plans.

All testing is administered according to state and federal guidelines. Information is disseminated to students and parents. Test data summaries are shared with the Board of Directors and stakeholders. Teachers are trained to use the data in making curriculum and student decisions.

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

The school has a comprehensive evaluation program for all students.

Students and parents are given the test data with explanations.

Test data is disaggregated to determine student and curriculum strengths and needs.

Individual conferences are scheduled for all high school students to monitor academic progress.

The school's test results are above the national and state average.

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

Chart progress annually by cohorts and individual students on the End of Grade Tests in grades 4-8.

Use the End of Grade and End of Course Summary Sheets to align goals with testing objectives.

Disaggregate test data by subgroups and use the results to modify the instructional program.

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

Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems

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

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

The school recruits and employs qualified teachers, and assignments are based on professional preparation, knowledge and experience. The dedicated, passionate staff is committed to providing a quality and challenging education for the students. Teachers are engaged in a continuous program of professional growth. Frequently, peer staff development is provided. In-house classroom observations among teachers are scheduled. Teachers are permitted to attend workshops and conferences and the information is shared with the faculty.

All financial transactions are monitored and audited. Procedures are followed in purchasing.

The facilities are clean, well-maintained and conducive to a good learning environment. Crisis management procedures are disseminated to parents and are on the website. Practice drills occur during the school year.

Guidance services are available for all students. The counselor focuses on college prep counseling for students in grades 9-12. A conference with each student is scheduled in the summer to assess the student's progress.

The stakeholders are committed and supportive the school. The Alumni Association is actively involved in the total school program. Volunteers are very important to the school program.

The Director of Development is responsible for securing funding for the school. There are several fund-raising activities each year.

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

Stakeholders are resourceful in securing and implementing support for the school.

Professional growth opportunities are provided for the staff.

Emphasis is placed on college counseling. The counselor meets with each student in the summer to monitor

student academic progress.

Resource programs are available for students with special needs.

The administration and guidance counselor have open-door policies.

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

Develop and implement an intervention program for special needs students.

Seek grants as a source of funding for special projects and technology.

Provide staff development on differentiated/individualized instruction.

Develop and implement a recruitment and retention plan for teachers.

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

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

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

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

Ridgcroft School values its communication and relationship with its stakeholders.

Two parent and faculty surveys provide valuable data for consideration, analysis, and implementation of viable ideas. The school's "open door" policy, direct parent communication and communication with board members assure a constant and necessary flow of information. Publication of the School Improvement Plan engenders widespread support for the position of the school from various constituent groups.

The development office is the resource mechanism for promoting the school in the community.

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

The drug testing policy assures stakeholders that the school has a clear stand on drugs at the school for faculty and students.

The purchase of the one-call system assures timely communication.

The commitment on the part of the school to provide for more professional development opportunities reassures parents that the faculty is in a community learning environment.

The commitment to expand technology assures parents that their children will be competitive in a globally flattening world.

Hiring a curriculum specialist provides for a seamless spiraling curriculum.

The consideration being given to posting board minutes on the website in 2008-2009 offers stakeholders an immediate opportunity to ascertain the decisions made at this level of governance.

Stakeholder communications and relationships receive the highest marks from all constituent groups.

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

Seek additional support for the school through business and community support, such as Adopt a School.

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

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

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

The school is committed to continuous improvement. The total school program is aligned with the vision and mission. A challenging curriculum with high expectations for student achievement is provided. Students and parents are aware and appreciative of the challenging course offerings that are available through the school's honor and AP classes, community college and internet.

The curriculum is aligned to the NC Standard Course of Study. Pacing guides are used to ensure that the curriculum is taught. The school improvement plan is revised as needed. Student progress is monitored by progress reports, report cards and testing. Curriculum revisions are data driven and made as needed.

Professional growth opportunities are available for the staff. Staff development is provided for teachers on campus and through state conferences and workshops. Peer observations are scheduled within the school.

Student progress is communicated to parents and students. Summary data is shared with PTO and Board of Directors. The school's test results are compared to state and national averages.

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

The curriculum is aligned with the vision and mission and also the Standard Course of Study.

The End of Grade and End of Course Tests are also aligned with the Standard Course of Study. This enables the school to determine curriculum strengths and needs.

The school improvement plan is revised as needed to accommodate curriculum revisions

Staff development is provided for the teachers.

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

Provide staff development on differentiated teaching to accommodate the needs of the students.

Chart student and cohort test data vertically to monitor growth in achievement.

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

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Conclusion

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

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

The Quality Assurance Review Team expresses appreciation to Elton L. Winslow, Sr., 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 SACS CASI accreditation with AdvancED.

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Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Mrs. Genevieve Taylor, Chair
- Michael Pratt, Team Member (Rocky Mount Preparatory 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.