

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 Redemptorist Diocesan Regional High School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana on 10/06/2008 - 10/07/2008.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed the Principal, 4 members of the administrative team, 16 students, 5 parents, and 13 teachers. In addition, Community Members 2 and Alumni 1 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.

- Continuous Improvement is evident in all facets of Redemptorist Diocesan Regional High School (RHS).

The school has dedicated the last five years to maintaining a constant and steady focus on making a difference in improving learning through the continuous improvement of instructional practices and organizational conditions. For academic improvement, The school has developed an Act Prep class to improve the math and language scores. Positive results have been realized with increases in the overall ACT average.

A comprehensive evaluation of the scope and sequence in each subject area has been completed. Scope and sequence of the textbooks are aligned in grades 7 through 12 and are consistent in curriculum steps. There is now constant communication between the Junior and Senior High concerning scope and sequence. Curricula in core subject areas are based upon Grade-Level Expectations (GLE) adopted by the state of Louisiana. All teachers are responsible for completing course calendars and lesson plans that clearly state what GLE and other

state standards are being met. The administration and department chairs check the lesson plans for alignment.

Emphasis has been placed on developing thinking skills. Teachers have been in-serviced in the implementation of "Thinking Maps." Students are encouraged to bring together knowledge from multiple classes through the use of this technique.

Building effective, productive and collegial teams is stressed at the school. Strong leadership motivates staff and school stakeholders to be advocates for continuous improvement. Emphasis has been placed on helping teachers improve their instruction. Teachers are encouraged to attend local and national conventions and workshops in their subject areas as well as in curriculum and instructional areas. Monies have been dedicated for professional development. A strong mentoring program has been established for new teachers.

Any organization needs to be committed to constantly evaluating itself in order to continue the improvement process. The organizational system and culture of the school are supportive of school improvement and professional development.

- Technology is imbedded in all classrooms, labs, and office areas of the campus.

A technology-rich environment exists to assist the needs of parents, students and teachers at the school. For the past nine years, the school has had a continuous emphasis on building its technology infrastructure. The school now hosts over 200 networked PC's throughout the campus in classrooms, labs and offices. Every classroom has a computer connected to an LCD projector used with a seven foot screen which creates multimedia presentation rooms.

The school has partnered with the Louisiana Virtual School (LVS) to offer several courses for students. Digital Graphics and Animation and Web Mastering are online courses the students can take during the school day. There are a number of online research engines to assist the school in reaching all learners. The computer lab is available for student, faculty and parent use. The Language Science Lab is available to assist dyslexic students.

Teachers use GradeQuick for organizing grades and class information. Students and parents use Edline to view progress reports for classes, school information, test information and teachers' class pages.

Administration and staff use Administrator's Plus/Odyssey. Schedules, student/family information, faculty information and transcripts are part of the Odyssey package. On the opinion inventories, 99% of the parents and 82.5% of the students feel that communication via technology is a strength.

A basic technology budget is funded each year. The budget pays for maintenance, support and basic improvements and upgrades.

Teachers are offered a variety of technology-based professional development courses on campus. All staff members attended a Web Literacy development program which includes an online learning component.

An understanding of technology and the use of technology in our everyday lives are crucial to success in the 21st Century. The school is providing a strong technology program to assist the students and the faculty members in the development of technology skills.

- The school provides a positive working relationship among all stakeholders. Pride and ownership in the school are felt and exhibited by all stakeholder groups.

The overall satisfaction rate for the school is high. On the opinion inventories, the satisfaction rate with the

school ranged from 96.1% for teachers to 70.2% for students. Parent satisfaction was at 93.9% and community satisfaction was 89.2%. In all interview sessions, the school was referred to as a “generational school.” Grandparents, parents and now grandchildren are attending the school. A past alumni president said that a strong aspect of the school is the sincere pride and happiness the parents feel as they see their children living and carrying on the school traditions. One of the school alumni that participated in the interviews does not have a child attending the school, but he is very loyal in support of his former school.

Both in the interview sessions and on the opinion inventories, respondents commented on the friendly family atmosphere that is present at the school. Parents (96.4%) and community members (92.2%) feel welcome at the school. A community member stated that the school has a good reputation of fulfilling its caring mission.

On the open-ended responses for the Teacher Opinion Inventory, teachers commented on a working environment for teachers and students that is comfortable and conducive for collaborative efforts. Teachers feel supported in their methods of instruction. They are allowed the freedom necessary to expand their individual strengths.

Students are given an active role in presenting the school to the parents, public and potential new students during tours, open houses and school functions. They feel that the teachers hold high expectations for them. Teachers challenge students to do their best.

The alumni association is a dedicated, caring, committed group of graduates who emphasize the goal, “Give back to RHS for it certainly has given to you!” As a result of the work of the alumni association, funds for needed school and classroom projects have been realized.

The school has been successful at community-building because of the positive and productive working relationship it has established with all of its stakeholders. It has created and sustained a learning environment that nurtures a sense of caring and belonging.

- The school has a strong vision and mission that supports a diversified learning community.

The school is dedicated to providing a comprehensive, Catholic, co-educational program to meet the individual needs of its students. The school is committed to spiritual growth, moral development and academic excellence. It has a belief in the education of all students.

The school has a Language Science Lab for students that have been diagnosed dyslexic by a licensed psychologist. Career Education students are mainstreamed for certain subjects.

The school provides 504 accommodations for students with disabilities. Numerous honor courses are offered. Advanced placement is offered and encouraged. Students are allowed to co-enroll at local colleges and vocational/technical schools. The curriculum is designed not only to provide students with the courses necessary for graduation, but also to offer numerous electives that will fulfill individual needs and interests.

Broad offerings of extracurricular activities exhibit a commitment to fulfill the needs of a student body with a wide range of interests.

Interviews with the various stakeholder groups revealed that they felt that the school was the most diverse Catholic school in the diocese and that it has given an environment which promotes all of its students to be well-rounded people. The diversity of the school reflects the diversity of the real world. The school is building mutual respect in a family atmosphere. There is a place for all students at the school.

The diversity of the student body, the curricular and extracurricular offerings and activities allow the students to develop strong interpersonal skills, spiritual growth, moral development and academic excellence.

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.

- Devise a systematic and sustainable School Improvement Plan in order to assist the school in measuring annual progress.

Improvement plans have been developed by the various departments. In reviewing these plans, the Quality Assurance Team noted that there is no consistent format used across the department plans. The school improvement plan is very general and does not always correlate with the department plans. The outline format of an improvement plan should contain: targeted areas of improvement, improvement goals, expectation(s) for student learning, targeted participants, interventions, evaluation, time frame, actions, schedule, responsibilities, monitoring and resources.

The creation of a standard format in department and school wide improvement plans aids articulation and consistency among department.

- Use comprehensive school data to make informed curricular and organizational decisions.

The profile influences all improvement efforts. It is the source of data and information used to identify gaps in student performance. Even though profile data was collected for this Quality Assurance Review, it was not presented in a fashion that allowed the information to be easily compared. Returning to the former practice of developing a self-study document would have been helpful in organizing information to compare current realities with desired performances for the school's learning process.

Data needs to be organized before it can be analyzed. Through the analysis of profile data, all stakeholders acquire a comprehensive picture of the school and are then able to determine practices and organizational conditions which are needed to improve student learning.

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.