

Report of the
Quality Assurance Review Team
for
Kansas School for the Deaf

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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 North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), a division of AdvancED, visited the Kansas School for the Deaf in Olathe, Kansas on 11/10/2008 - 11/10/2008.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed the Superintendent, 3 members of the administrative team, 8 students, 8 parents, and 9 teachers. In addition, Building Steering Committee 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.

- **It is quite evident that The Kansas School for the Deaf (KSD) vision is fully embedded in the culture of the school, including students, faculty, staff, administration, and parent stakeholders.**

Throughout all focus group discussions held during the Quality Assurance Review (QAR), all stakeholders communicated that the mission/ vision is a daily practice at the school.

Demonstration of a clear vision/ mission as an organization is very important, but living the vision/ mission has become routine practice at The Kansas State School for the Deaf.

- **Teachers demonstrated student progress/response to intervention to both individual and grouped interventions.**

A variety of documentation was provided during the QAR review indicating that the Kansas School for the Deaf staff have fully embraced response to intervention. The assessment system was appropriately tiered from overall goals—addressing deficits in reading and math—to specific interventions and activities that are clearly defined and measurable. There is evidence that the entire KSD community has embraced the assessment efforts.

Response to intervention based on student progress/ assessment data is a strength area at KSD.

- **The Kansas State School for the Deaf identified the need for professional learning communities (PLCs) and implemented the strategy during the previous school year.**

It is evident that PLCs are working well and allow the teachers to review the student assessment data and develop tailored instruction to meet the needs of every student. Faculty and administration indicate that the PLC strategy works effectively and they desire to learn additional ways to make PLC work even more effectively to support student learning. Assessment data included Kansas Assessment and Multiple Measures of Academic Progress (MAP).

Professional Learning Communities were implemented at the Kansas State School for the Deaf during the previous school year and the faculty and administration want the effort to continue. PLC's benefit the students at the school by providing faculty the opportunity to collaborate using assessment data and implementation of instructional strategies that provide tailored instruction for each student at the school.

- **The Kansas State School for the Deaf (KSD) demonstrates a “bottom up” leadership philosophy.**

Shared leadership is evident throughout KSD. It is apparent that staff buy in to the school improvement process and related strategies, and their roles in the process are not just delegated, they function as a team because everyone knows their roles and play their part. Further, the importance of the schools' teacher leaders is evident, especially their ownership of the school improvement process. The faculty leaders, along with the school administration communicated their common goals, support of the school improvement process, and efforts to tailor student instruction for each student attending the Kansas State School for the Deaf. Further, parents and students both shared their affirmation of the benefits of the bottom up" philosophy and its positive impact on the students. Based on the input from each of the focus groups during the QAR Review, it is obvious that the faculty leaders, and the school administration share common goals and vision.

The "bottom up" philosophy works well for the school and has a highly beneficial impact on the students.

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.

- **Formalize a process for gaining information about current general assessment efforts being used in school districts in the state (e.g., MTSS/three tiered intervention models, benchmarking, professional learning communities, and formative assessment development) to compare your assessment results on the state tests to**

the subgroup of students with hearing loss in individual districts and in the state as a whole (these data should be available to you from the state).

KSD puts great effort into the review of state assessment and other assessment results. Using other school/district data, especially for hearing impaired students enrolled in other schools throughout the state would provide additional insight into successful programming/ strategies that could be utilized at KSD.

Often special purpose schools are left out of professional development efforts occurring in school districts and this information could be beneficial to your ongoing improvement efforts.

- **Establish better communication and relationships between the Kansas School for the Deaf and other schools to better facilitate the opportunities of applicable students, especially secondary school students to support their highest possible student achievement.**

Several students, especially high school students attend both the Kansas School for the Deaf and other public schools. This provides students the opportunity to take all studies that they desire, including coursework that best meets their needs.

It will be important for the Kansas State School for the Deaf administration and faculty to increase communications with the other schools to partner in building the best programming possible to meet the applicable students needs.

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 NCA CASI accreditation seals are available at www.advanced.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 Kansas School for the Deaf 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 Kansas State School for the Deaf (KSD) establishes a vision for the school in collaboration with its stakeholders. Evidence during the KSD review indicates practices and procedures are clearly in place to support Standard 1.

KSD communicates the vision and purpose of the school using school newsletters, emails, site council meetings, and teacher/ staff interactions with parents. Throughout the parent focus group meeting, parents shared their support of the school, the positive impact of the school vision and purpose on their child, and the fact that the school provided a life line for the child and family.

The school identified goals to advance their vision using a large amount of data, as well as staff, student, and parent input.

It is evident that the school developed and continuously maintains a profile of the school, its students, and the community. The profile includes information on the history of the school, school improvement process, demographic data, parent survey, and a wide variety of assessment data, all of which supports the focus group communications and observations made during the review visit.

KSD ensures that the school's vision and purpose guide the teaching and learning process. It is clear that the vision is embedded in the school culture, to the point that it has become part of the daily routine. The school staff clearly demonstrates that tailoring instruction to meet the needs of each student is their number one priority, followed closely by the support provided to deaf students as a culture group.

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

- Site Council, parent, and staff input on the vision and mission of the KSD
- A “bottom up” leadership philosophy, including shared leadership is evident throughout KSD. It is apparent that KSD staff buy in to the school improvement process and related strategies, and their roles in the process are not just delegated, they function as a team because everyone knows their roles and play their part. Further, the importance of the schools’ teacher leaders is evident, especially their ownership of the school improvement process.

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

- Continue your efforts in this standard.

Finding: Kansas School for the Deaf has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" 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 Kansas State School for the Deaf (KSD) establishes policies and procedures that provide for the effective operation of the school. The school uses a "bottom up" approach to leadership, especially with respect to school improvement efforts. It is evident that the teacher leaders support the school administration (mutual support) because of the "bottom up" approach to input and the school improvement process.

Compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations is ensured at KSD, yet they make a rigorous effort to tailor instruction for each student. The student and parent focus groups both indicated that the school fosters a learning community, specifically a deaf learning community that promotes a positive and conducive learning environment. They keep their teachers current by implementing an evaluation system that provides for the professional growth of all personnel.

KSD students have the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of curricular and extracurricular activities sponsored by the school. Many students attend both KSD and other public schools, especially at the high school level. The student focus group shared information about the school's extracurricular activities, social activities, and their pride in being part of the school community.

The parent focus group shared their comfort in participating in various events at the school and the school's responsiveness to parent input. It is evident that parents feel that they are part of the school community and are very satisfied with the school. In many cases, they shared specific experiences in which the public schools did not meet their child's needs and how their child has benefited from the efforts of KSD.

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

- Teachers utilize professional learning communities.
- "Bottom up" approach to school leadership is evident.
- The school utilizes a wide variety of school/ parent communications to gain input from parents.
- Administration supports bi-lingual education (English and American Sign Language).
- All KSD students have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) which are regularly reviewed and appropriately modified when needed.

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

- Continue to find ways to enhance the vision to support the unique culture of the school.

Finding: Kansas School for the Deaf 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 Kansas School for the Deaf (KSD) has developed and implemented curriculum based on clearly defined expectations for student learning. The goals and measurement tools were clearly defined and well thought out. The focus and clarity of the school improvement goals were very impressive.

They promote active involvement of students in the learning process, including opportunities for them to explore application of higher-order thinking skills and investigate new approaches to applying their learning. With special attention being paid to fitting the curriculum to each student, as opposed to fitting the student to the curriculum, KSD is providing students the opportunity to have classes appropriate for their needs and opportunities to progress and grow academically.

KSD gathers, analyzes, and uses data and research in making curricular and instructional choices. While they rated themselves "emerging" in this area, the collection, analysis, and use of data was quite strong. Both the quality and the quantity of data collected were impressive, and they were using it effectively (even when they got results that did not fit into their paradigm). They used a wide variety of evaluative tools and did an admirable job of addressing the results of the data provided.

The design and use of instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that are research-based is evident, and seems to be reflective of best practices. KSD has made a concerted effort to seek out research based methods to improve their instruction, which was at times difficult given their clientele and their need for visual (not auditory) materials. Furthermore, they have effectively used the results of their data to design programs which are helping to produce a marked difference in their test scores, in part because they protect instructional time to support learning. Interventions are implemented to help students meet expectations for student learning, and they were clearly defined and documented and seemed to be effective.

KSD attempts to offer a curriculum that challenges each student to excel, although more effort needs to be made in challenging their higher level students. Stronger connections need to be made with other secondary and post-secondary programs in order to address this goal. Their school climate and vision reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity.

They provide for articulation and alignment between and among all levels of schools, however, a continued effort to increase the relationships already present with the public schools, vocational school, and local junior college is recommended.

Clearly the school is conscious of school climate and takes appropriate steps to ensure that it is conducive to student learning. In fact, the evidence is that both parent and student groups list this as a clear strength of the school. Creating an environment in which the students' communication mode is the norm instead of the exception seems to be paramount in accentuating the positive environment evident at the school.

KSD makes a strong attempt to provide information to its stakeholders through several outlets. School newsletters, contact through email, and contacts in the deaf community are used to support their curricular and instructional programs.

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

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

- Both the data collection and analysis areas were impressive.
- Clarity of the goals gave the teachers the best opportunity to buy into the vision and help carry it forward. There was a clear sense that they knew where they were going and were headed in the same direction.

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

- Establish better communication and relationships between KSD and other schools to better facilitate the opportunities of the higher level students to achieve at their highest possible levels.

Finding: Kansas School for the Deaf 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 clearly established a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance, and uses these results to improve both student performance and school effectiveness. Performance measures were determined based on a series of reliable and valid assessments, i.e., Stanford Achievement test, Kansas State Assessment, and Kansas English Language Performance Assessment (KELPA) Reading Assessment. Moreover, when assessments were not available that would provide the type of information desired, a new appropriate assessment was developed by the team, i.e., Fairview Multiple

Meanings Assessment.

The system was well conceived initially with a clear rationale for the choice of focus areas—reading and math; specific interventions; and a number of instructional activities for each intervention. The system includes a combination of formative assessments used by teachers to monitor progress on individual students in the classroom and summative assessments, which provide data that is then aggregated and evaluated for overall program information. Finally, the system includes a specific schedule of data analysis and review. This occurs annually and the administration supports the review by funding the summer meetings to evaluate the data and adjust interventions accordingly.

Specific to KSD, student growth in American Sign Language (ASL), or lack thereof, is an important aspect of the overall assessment system. While not a direct part of the math or science goals or the interventions chosen for either one, because language remains such a critical aspect of student learning and success, both class placement and language supports were included in the comprehensive efforts to address the primary goals.

The assessment results are communicated to teachers, parents, and students in a variety of ways. Because teachers are such an integral part of the system, they are made aware of the results on individual students immediately. The data are aggregated by the school improvement coordinator and analyzed for trends across three areas—gender, ethnicity, and early/late access to language—which are then shared with the teachers in the summer meetings. Parents are provided with information on their child’s performance at IEP meetings, and the aggregated assessment reports can be found on the school website as well as being shared with the school Advisory Committee/Site Council, which meets twice a year. Clearly, assessment results are communicated with students. In fact, students in the focus group showed an ability to use the language appropriately discussing their “zone of proximal development” and Star Reading Level.

KSD compares their data to hearing peers and to other deaf/hard of hearing students in several areas. They use the Stanford Achievement Test with deaf norms as well as the Kansas State Assessment. This allows for comparison of KSD students to other students with hearing loss and to all students in Kansas. This is an excellent strategy because it lets them look at student performance within and across populations. Thus, growth trajectory can be shown over the years comparing KSD students to the year before and KSD students to other students in Kansas.

The school reports that it maintains a secure, accurate, and complete student record system in accordance with state and federal regulations. Given that KSD is a special purpose school with all students having IEPs, they fall under the state and federal guidelines for record keeping in compliance with school and IDEA guidelines.

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

- Teachers can demonstrate student progress/response to intervention to both individual and grouped interventions. The assessment system was appropriately tiered from overall goals—addressing deficits in reading and math—to specific interventions and activities that are clearly defined and measurable. There is evidence that the entire KSD community has embraced the assessment efforts.
- The school uses a bottom up model in developing and implementing the assessment system with input from those most directly informed about the concerns and responsible for actually implementing change.

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

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- Compare your assessment results on the state tests to the subgroup of students with hearing loss in individual districts and in the state as a whole. These data should be available from the state.
- Formalize a process for gaining information about current general assessment efforts being used in school districts in the state, e.g., MTSS/three tiered intervention models, benchmarking, professional learning communities, and formative assessment development. Often special purpose schools are left out of professional development efforts occurring in school districts and this information could be beneficial to your ongoing improvement efforts.

Finding: Kansas School for the Deaf 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 Kansas School for the Deaf (KSD) recruits, employs, and mentors qualified professional staff capable of fulfilling assigned roles and responsibilities. Because of their special needs, they recruit nationally and have a tight partnership with colleges with deaf education programs. They assign professional staff responsibilities based on their qualifications, i.e., professional preparation, ability, knowledge, and experience. They have effectively identified what personnel needs they have to support their students and have been able to provide and assign staff sufficient in number to meet the vision and purpose of the school. A low teacher-student ratio (4:1) is found throughout the school.

All staff members participate in a continuous program of professional development, much of which is provided with on-site staff. They effectively facilitated school wide staff development during the initial years of the implementation of interventions, however, they did not have a solid plan to support new staff members who came on board later in the cycle.

KSD has a system in place which provides for collaboration to analyze and review student performance and school effectiveness. During summer work sessions, KSD staff review data from Kansas Assessments, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), and other assessments to develop appropriate curricula for the upcoming year. Faculty members utilize professional learning communities every other Friday to work on instructional strategies to assist struggling students, as well as support new and seasoned staff members.

The school is effectively utilizing resources that support its vision and educational programs and implement its plan for improvement. Further, KSD maintains the site, facilities, services, and equipment to provide an environment that is safe and orderly for all occupants, including dorm /residential housing. They have a written security and crisis management plan with appropriate training for stakeholders.

Each student has access to guidance services that include, but are not limited to, counseling, appraisal, mentoring, staff consulting, referral, and educational and career planning. Several students attend both KSD and other public schools to meet their needs, especially at the high school level. Coordination of services could be improved among all schools involved.

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

- Teachers participate in professional learning communities that promote a tailored instructional program for each student attending KSD.
- Strong efforts have been made to maintain a low teacher-student ratio
- Positive Behavior Support has been implemented.

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

- During the school improvement cycle, there was approximately 70 % turnover of elementary staff, in part due to age of the staff. Continue to develop a plan to promote the development of highly qualified staff throughout the cycle.
- Improve the coordination of programming among all schools providing services to students.

Finding: Kansas School for the Deaf 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:

KSD fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning. They have involved parents in the IEP process of their students, in parent-teacher conferences, and in regular communication with individual teachers. Numerous support personnel are available to help with various aspects of learning (bilingual coordinator, curriculum and instructional coordinator, and IEP coordinator). They contact parents through formal channels to listen to and communicate appropriate services and student progress. This is evidenced in that newsletters go out weekly at the elementary level, emails are shared among parents and teachers/educational personnel, and information is available on the school's website.

There appeared to be a family atmosphere of support built into the culture of the school that parents shared with a passion. This can be attributed to both the nature of the school and the dual responsibility of the school to educate the child as well as provide a home for them during the week (for those living in the dorm). This requires the school to solicit the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance the work of the school by involving their stakeholders in whatever supportive role they can. Numerous parents cited volunteerism and even work done for the school since they got so involved with the educational process of their own child/ren. Several parents shared the need for additional support networks for the deaf culture, with a suggestion for partnering non-deaf parents with deaf parents for a broadened opportunity to understand the deaf culture.

Expectations for student learning and goals for improvement are communicated to all stakeholders via newsletter, on the website, and through semi-annual Site Council meetings. Additionally, these are shared for individual students with parents via the IEP meetings and regular communication relative to student progress.

Multiple opportunities are available for stakeholders to receive information about students, their performance, and school effectiveness. While the bulk of the information is about individual student performance,

numerous reports are provided to stakeholders about the collective aggregate student performance. There were numerous articles in the newsletter, along with legislative updates related to deaf education. The website includes links to the profile and school improvement plan.

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

- Parents and students were particularly verbal about the supportive environment have experienced here.
- The school has numerous vehicles they utilize to communicate with their stakeholders.
- The business of school improvement is becoming far more institutionalized, with all stakeholders having a sense of the process.

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

- Parents referenced the need for additional opportunities to feel supported and to understand the deaf culture.
- Continue to look for ways to seek feedback from parents and community for a more collaborative communication process.

Finding: Kansas School for the Deaf 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:

KSD is a commendable example of a school that engages in a continuous process of improvement! The leadership has done a highly effective job of coordinating the process and the school has a culture of shared leadership that is ever so impressive. The school has a clear vision, the profile data is updated and used regularly, the data on implementation of strategies and student achievement are used to make adaptations in the classroom and drive student programming, and school personnel have thoughtfully reflected on the process and made changes as appropriate.

Stakeholders have been involved in this process via survey data of parents and Site Council members and through direct stakeholder input from the Site Council members as well as individual parent contacts. Parents felt that they were informed about individual and aggregate student progress, and documents were available for them to look at on the website. Teachers were ever so passionate about their involvement in the bottom-up approach to school improvement. This resulted in tremendous buy in from the classroom teachers. Since school improvement happens in the classroom, it is a critical component that has contributed greatly to their success.

KSD staff ensures that plans for continuous improvement are aligned with the vision and purpose of the school and expectations for student learning and have incorporated it into the very fiber of their daily practices. Given that this is a special purpose school, stakeholders are very clear about the vision and mission of the school and were able to share it conceptually. Every aspect of the school improvement process was funded because of this tight alignment and the healthy balance of interventions relative to availability of funds.

Professional development for school personnel was provided to help them implement improvement interventions to achieve improvement goals. This was done primarily in the first two years in terms of awareness level workshops. However, PLCs were incorporated in 2007-08 that allowed for the necessary collaboration that takes professional development to a deeper level. The professional development system did not take into account the follow-up training needed when staff turnover takes place. Given the likelihood that this will continue to occur and is a natural component of professional development, this needs to be included to make that process solid. Further, develop quality assurance measures for your professional development.

Tremendous increases in student achievement results have occurred in the duration of this school improvement cycle. The monitoring and adjustments of the interventions have been communicated to stakeholders along with the results of improvement efforts. Certainly, individual student progress is shared with parents, but the results are clearly posted on the website and some have been in the newsletter. However, the final results presented in this QAR Visit should certainly appear in upcoming newsletters.

Summer institutes for the leadership team were facilitated to evaluate and document the effectiveness and impact of its continuous process of improvement. The data was shared with the entire staff, and adjustments were made for individual students and overall programming for the next school year. This annual review of effectiveness greatly contributed to the success of the process.

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

- KSD's school improvement process is highly effective and is focused on students.
- The school has done a tremendous job of facilitating shared leadership
- Data has been used to impact instruction and kept your decision making aligned to your vision.
- Increases in student achievement speaks volumes.

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

- Include components to your staff development plan to address staff turnover.
- Operationalize your PLCs to fully marry student achievement data with intervention implementation data.
- Determine measures for organizational effectiveness and ensure the reporting of these to stakeholders.
- Celebrate! Celebrate! Celebrate! Work that is this successful should not go unrecognized.

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

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 Robert Maile, 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 accreditation with AdvancED.

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Mr. William Hatfield, Chair (USD 202)
- Dr. Nancy Bolz, Vice Chair (Kansas NCA)
- Charles Golladay, Team Member (Olathe South High School)
- Dr. Sally Roberts, Team Member (University of Kansas)

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.