

**Report of the
Quality Assurance Review Team
for
Diocese of Savannah**

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

Quality Assurance Review Report

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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 Schools (SACS CASI) accredit public and private schools and districts in 30 states, the Navajo Nation, Latin America, and the Department of Defense Schools worldwide.

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

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

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

1) Meet the AdvancED Standards and Policies for Quality School Systems. School districts demonstrate adherence to the seven AdvancED standards and policies which describe the quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for school districts to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness.

2) Engage in continuous improvement. School districts and their schools implement a continuous improvement process that articulates the vision and purpose that the school district is pursuing (vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school and district effectiveness, and the school community (profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (results).

3) Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review. School districts and schools engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, school districts host an external quality assurance review team once every five years. The team evaluates the school district's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the school district's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and required actions to help the school district improve. The team provides an oral exit report to the school district and a written report detailing the team's required actions. The school district acts on the team's required actions and submits a progress report two years following the review.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI accreditation engages the entire school district community in a continuous process of self-evaluation and improvement. The overall aim is to help school districts and their schools maximize student success and improve organizational effectiveness

Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

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

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

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

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

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

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

Using the Report - Responding to the Required Actions. The school district uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The school district is held accountable for addressing the required actions identified in the report. The AdvancED State Office is available to assist the school district in addressing the required actions. Following the Quality Assurance Review Team visit, the school district must submit a progress report detailing the actions and progress it has made on the team's required actions. The report is reviewed at the state and national level to ensure the school district is addressing the required actions.

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

Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the SACS CASI Georgia State Office (SACS-CASI-GA), a division of AdvancED, visited Diocese of Savannah on 12/05/2010 - 12/08/2010.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 23 administrators, 54 teachers, 0 support staff, 38 parents and business partners, 64 students, and 20 Board of Education members for a total of 199 stakeholders. In addition to meeting with district personnel and stakeholders, the team visited 7 schools within the school district. During the school visits, team members interviewed school stakeholders, observed classrooms, and reviewed relevant school artifacts. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the district. Specifically, the team examined the district's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

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

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

Through its examination of the school district's adherence to the standards, the Quality Assurance Review Team prepared reports on each standard, highlighting strengths and suggestions for improvement specific to each standard. These reports can be found following this summary.

The Quality Assurance Review Team also examined the effectiveness of the district's methods for quality assurance. The team reviewed the district's practices and methods to monitor and document improvement, provide meaningful feedback and support across the district, ensure that AdvancED standards are met and strengthened, and regularly collect, use, and communicate results. The team's findings in this area can be found following the standard reports.

The team used the standard reports and quality assurance findings to identify common themes, significant accomplishments, and pressing needs facing the district. These became the basis for the overall commendations and required actions that are provided below. The commendations and required actions should serve as the focus for the district as it acts on the team's findings. They represent the areas that the team believes will have the greatest impact in helping the district further its improvement efforts. The standard reports and quality assurance findings can be used to help reinforce and enrich the district's understanding of the commendations and required actions.

Commendations

The Quality Assurance Review Team commends the Diocese of Savannah 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.

- **Catholic identity is valued, celebrated, and integrated into school life.**

Faith and teachings of the Church are evident through the support and interaction of the clergy, faculty and staff, by school environments that are identifiably Catholic, and by ensuring formal religious instruction, participation in the sacramental life of the Church, and adherence to principles of social justice.

An authentically Catholic vision sets a diocesan-wide purpose and direction that guides improvement of student learning based on Gospel values.

- **Despite geographical constraints, leaders at the diocesan, Catholic School Office (CSO), and school levels ensure collaboration and shared responsibility for diocesan and school improvement efforts.**

The CSO gathers principals regularly, and every principal serves on a committee to review curriculum, plan the Diocesan Education Institute (DEI), update policy and procedures, and prepare accreditation reviews.

A culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation.

- **The Diocesan Education Institute (DEI) is an exemplary model of ongoing faith formation and professional development for Catholic school administrators and educators.**

This annual 3-day event, planned collaboratively by the CSO and Catholic school educators, is designed to bring teachers together to network as colleagues, cultivate new teaching skills, and support one another in the ministry of Catholic education. All stakeholder groups identified the DEI as a strength.

Job-embedded learning opportunities, identified by educators and fully supported by the diocese and schools, sustain a culture of continuous improvement.

- **The diocesan accreditation process has unified school improvement efforts at the diocesan and school levels and served as a catalyst to identify and address challenges through a formal action plan.**

The Catholic School Office (CSO) and schools have worked together to meet SACS standards, create improvement plans, and participate in quality assurance review processes.

Improvement efforts are being developed, and the diocese and its schools demonstrate progress in improving student performance in concert with diocesan and school effectiveness.

Required Actions

In addition to the commendations, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following required actions for improvement. The team focused its required actions on those areas that, if addressed, will have the greatest

impact on improving student performance and overall effectiveness of the school district. The Diocese of Savannah will be held accountable for making progress on each of the required actions noted in this section. Following this review, the school district will be asked to submit a progress report on these required actions. The district should refer to the detail provided in the standard reports for guidance and greater depth on the required actions.

- **Create a diocesan technology plan for Catholic schools that includes strategies which coordinate and ensure ready access to instructional technology, research information and media services, and instructional materials necessary for effective technological instruction to prepare students for life and work in the 21st century.**

CSO, staff, stakeholder, and student interviews revealed the need to expand technology and the technical support to help ensure that students have the tools to achieve academic excellence consistent with the diocese's vision.

School technology plans that are aligned to a long-term systemic diocesan technology plan will ensure ready access to instructional technology, information and media services, and materials needed for effective instruction and achievement in student learning.

- **Engage stakeholders to identify a consistent instrument to gather, analyze, and report stakeholder input across all Catholic schools.**

The Self Assessment Report (SAR) and CSO interviews reported current survey data for 8 of the 15 diocesan schools.

Consistent survey data across all stakeholder groups and Catholic schools will provide a complete picture of stakeholder perceptions to support improvement efforts and could serve as the research base for a unified marketing plan for Catholic schools.

- **In consultation with diocesan leadership and central office staff, develop a diocesan advancement plan for Catholic schools to improve financial viability and sustainability, including strategies for raising funds for endowment, grants, and financial assistance.**

All stakeholder groups identified financial resources as a challenge and spoke about the need for unified efforts in seeking additional funding sources.

Additional financial resources will support educational programs, improvement efforts, and increased enrollment.

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

Next Steps

The school district should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all stakeholders.
2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the commendations section to

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

Resources

AdvancED offers a range of resources to support your school district as it acts on the findings in this report. The AdvancED Resource Network, available at www.advanc-ed.org/resourcenetwork, provides an online network of peer-to-peer practices, best practices, and resources and tools designed to help school districts and their schools with continuous improvement.

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the visit, the Quality Assurance Review Team submits an accreditation recommendation to AdvancED for review and action at the national level by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the school district. Upon receiving its accreditation, the school district should celebrate its achievement with the community. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and other related items can be ordered from the website to help you share your accomplishment with your community.

Summary

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

Standards for Accreditation

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

The Quality Assurance Review Team divided into standard teams to review each standard and prepare a standards report summarizing the team's findings. These standard reports, along with the quality assurance findings that follow these reports, provided the basis for the team's identification of over-arching commendations and required actions presented earlier in this report. The reports submitted by each team are provided on the following pages for the district's review and use. Each report reflects its respective team's unique voice, perspective, and deliberations. The reports can be used to help enrich and deepen the district's understanding of the overall commendations and required actions.

Standard 1. Vision & Purpose

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

Description:

The vision and purpose for the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Savannah, Georgia are defined by the mission and belief statements. The mission and belief statements for the diocese were understood by a majority of the stakeholders as articulated through the many interviews conducted by the Quality Assurance Review (QAR) team and the presence of these statements in a variety of printed materials.

At each school site during the self-study process, stakeholders engaged in a consultative process for the vision and purpose of Catholic schools within the diocese. This process included the ranking of the indicators on a scale of 1 – 4 and briefly responding to the focus questions. Members of the steering committee compiled these results and various artifacts. In November 2009, the mission statement and goals were approved by all administrators. This approval laid the foundation for the future work of the Steering Committee and the schools.

Through various activities, the leadership of the diocese demonstrates support of the mission and belief statements of the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Savannah. The Bishop attends the Diocesan Education Institute (DEI) as well as other events, and the members of the Catholic School Office place a high priority on regular school visits and are also present at various events. As evidenced through the interviews and various forms of communication from the CSO, the mission and belief statements are evident to a majority of stakeholders.

Through an effective committee structure, the principals assume responsibility in many areas including policy development, curriculum, and professional development. In this way, diocesan-wide goals are established with ownership of all principals and the willingness to make these a reality. A culture of accountability is established within the diocese as each school is asked to have a School Improvement Plan (SIP).

The CSO staff established a process for collecting and maintaining reports and input from the schools.

Distributing a CD to all the schools with the pertinent reports allows for accurate and timely collection of information from the schools. The collection of this information enables the CSO to complete reports to the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) as well as enabling the leadership to monitor areas such as enrollment, finances, teacher certification and evaluation, as well as test results and student performance.

The mission statement of the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Savannah clearly states a commitment to a unified educational program of the highest academic standard. External oversight by the Florida Catholic Conference (FCC) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), ensures that the standards are met and that schools are committed to continuous improvement. This process will continue going forward and will form the framework for quality assurance. The CSO and the schools will utilize a model of annual review of the schools' adherence to curricular and professional standards.

The commitment to adhere to the standards of FCC and SACS will enable the Catholic schools within the diocese to review the vision and purpose (mission and belief statements) on a regular basis, revising when necessary. The development of decisions and procedures to carry out the vision will be the joint responsibility of the CSO and school communities.

Central to the vision of the Diocese of Savannah is that the schools are authentically Catholic. To that end, the diocese used the FCC standards, specifically, Catholic identity. In these standards, the schools are challenged to focus on student learning in light of Gospel values. A goal for all schools is to retain a central focus on the Gospel values. It is the expectation that the written religion curriculum is followed in all the schools. The commitment of the diocesan staff to visit every school and participate in the evaluation process for administrators speaks to a sense of Christian community.

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

- The Catholic schools are committed to a unified educational program which is both authentically Catholic and of the highest academic standard. The mission statement and the belief statements of the diocese are understood by a majority of the stakeholders.
- Decisions made by the schools and at the diocesan level are mission driven. The mission is clear, and there is an honest attempt to make all decisions focused on the mission statement of the diocese.

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

- Review the mission statement of each school on a regular basis with particular attention given to the commitment to a unified educational program that is authentically Catholic and of the highest academic quality, as reflected in the mission statement of the diocese.
- Develop a formal plan to ensure that teachers of faith traditions other than Catholic understand the vocation of a Catholic school teacher. This opportunity is in light of the fact that it is difficult to employ Catholic teachers in this area.
- Implement a communication plan for pastors who are key stakeholders of Catholic schools, both pastors of parishes with schools and parishes without schools.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional," indicating that the Diocese of Savannah has met the accreditation requirements for the "Vision & Purpose" standard.

Standard 2. Governance & Leadership

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

Description:

The Diocese of Savannah has local school boards that work within the diocesan structure. The superintendent is recognized as the educational leader of the diocesan schools reporting directly to the Bishop.

Diocesan policies are updated and shared with local boards and principals, for compliance by all.

The CSO, composed of a superintendent and assistant superintendent and assisted by one administrative assistant, are present to all schools within the diocese through annual visits, evaluations, and as requested/needed by any school. The CSO staff ensures compliance of each school with relation to federal, state and local guidelines and requirements, as well as a systematic analysis of student achievement and financial viability.

With few members on the CSO staff, the principals have been given and accepted additional leadership roles to assist in leadership of Catholic schools. Through committee work, the principals as well as teachers and staff members, continue to enhance quality academic and Catholic identity programs within the schools of the diocese. Principals are given the local authority to implement policies and procedures as set forth by the diocese, based on their individual school populations and needs.

The diocesan school board has not been active for many years, and the CSO desires to regenerate the diocesan board to work for all schools within the diocese. Local school stakeholders including parents, teachers, board members and students were involved in the accreditation process at the local level to share with the diocesan level. Some pastors shared they were not involved, if they did not have a parish school.

The diocese has ample insurance programs to protect the human and material resources within the Catholic schools and central office.

The diocese provides legal representation for all Catholic schools as well as the CSO.

Individual professional growth plans for principals, teachers and staff members are part of the CSO requirements for all schools.

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

- Governance of the Catholic schools is a shared responsibility/authority of principals as well as the CSO.
- Principals and local school communities are given the opportunity to assist in review of diocesan policies and guidelines.

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

- Re-evaluate the goal of reinstating a diocesan school board to provide guidance for all schools in the diocese, based on the effective manner in which diocesan policies are currently established and

reviewed by local school constituents under the leadership of the superintendent. The re-evaluation should also be reviewed from the concern of the vast geographic expanse of the diocese and ability to include all areas in representation on the diocesan board.

- Re-evaluate the governance structure of Aquinas High School in light of recent change in leadership model, to ensure an understanding and clarification of the board’s role in governance. This may mean retaining the board as advisory/consultative or moving to a board of limited jurisdiction.
- Research alternative technological programs which would enable participation from representatives throughout the diocese in the decision-making process.
- Gather input from pastors and parishes without schools in formulating growth plans, to enhance support of Catholic schools and provide additional human and monetary resources.
- Establish a method of aligning and/or supplementing resources to support student programs across the diocese.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Diocese of Savannah has met the accreditation requirements for the "Governance & Leadership" standard.

Standard 3. Teaching & Learning

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

Description:

The Diocese of Savannah develops, articulates, and coordinates curriculum based on clearly-defined expectations for student learning, including essential knowledge and skills as verified by the ARCA documentation that has been submitted by each elementary school to the FCC. Teachers use a set curriculum to support students’ engagement in the learning process. Elementary curriculum reflects national and Georgia state standards; as well as, student needs as indicated by test data while the high school curriculum follows Georgia standards. The CSO provides curriculum guidelines for all subject areas. These guidelines are formulated in collaboration with administrators and classroom teachers from across the diocese. All completed and updated curriculum guides are available on the diocesan website. These are listed by curriculum area, grade level, and include years updated and edited.

There is a diocesan Curriculum Committee that, in conjunction with the CSO, “provides a continuously-updated curriculum which is academically challenging, developmentally appropriate, and in alignment with state and national standards.” The CSO ensures that elementary school curriculum is reviewed and revised at regular intervals. During interviews with principals and teachers, it was explained that there is a plan in place that allows for curriculum review on a rotating schedule. All academic areas are reviewed as well as “specials” areas such as foreign language and media and technology.

The diocese establishes appropriate expectations for students and supports student engagement in the learning process through the established curriculum. This includes opportunities for students to explore applications of higher order thinking skills and investigate new approaches to applying their learning. Teachers are encouraged to use new and creative techniques in the classroom to reach all types of learners and to integrate curriculum.

The Diocese of Savannah supports instruction that is research-based and reflective of best practice. This is

evidenced by the annual DEI, a 3-day conference that brings together all teachers and principals in the diocese. The location of the institute is rotated each year to ensure equitable access for all throughout the diocese. Teachers provide input on topics they would like to have covered at the institute as well as offering to be presenters for their colleagues. The institute always culminates with a noteworthy keynote speaker.

The CSO ensures that system-wide curricular and instructional decisions are based on data and research at all levels. The curriculum reflects national standards; as well as the standards of the state of Georgia curriculum and aligns with the Terra Nova assessed objectives. The system is active in research and analysis of current trends and research-based best practices. Additionally, the elementary schools throughout the system use the NCEA Assessment of Catholic Religious Education (ACRE) and Terra Nova test scores as a basis for evaluating student achievement. Diocesan high schools use the SAT and ACT tests.

The diocese supports a curriculum that challenges and meets the needs of each student, reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity. A variety of assessments are used by teachers in the classroom: formative, rubrics, performance assessments, teacher observations, portfolio assessments, and student self-assessment. The assessment data are used to provide feedback to re-plan, re-teach, or repeat as the individual needs of the students require.

The Diocese of Savannah allocates and protects instructional time to support student learning. This is supported by an annual calendar that includes 180 days of instruction. Annual calendars are submitted and approved by the CSO. Policies have been set for allotted time schedules. Schools in the Diocese of Savannah follow state policy for compulsory attendance. School calendars for all diocesan schools are available online. These calendars include: student start dates, student end dates, Christmas breaks, spring breaks and graduation dates. Also available on the diocesan website are summer calendars for each school that include: days open, hours, and dates closed.

The diocese maintains articulation among and between all levels of schooling to monitor student performance and ensure readiness for future schooling or employment. The CSO develops a spreadsheet to illustrate national scores and the relationship of individual schools' scores to the diocesan percentile. Schools track their progress from year to year and use the data to better direct curriculum needs.

The elementary school curriculum reflects national and state standards and supports the implementation of interventions to help students meet expectations for student learning as indicated by test data. Each school is required to submit a local staff development plan.

The Diocese of Savannah maintains a system-wide climate that supports student learning. Again, this is evidenced by the annual DEI. As teachers are given the ability to upgrade their own teaching practices, the students continue to reap the benefits of their professional development.

The diocese coordinates and ensures ready access to instructional technology, information and media services, and materials needed for effective instruction. Training in these areas is available at the DEI. All schools can access resources through the diocesan library. The CSO has worked on behalf of the schools to provide access to online services provided by *Encyclopedia Britannica*. The diocese requires that all schools have technology plans and has a technology curriculum. The CSO alerts school staffs to the availability of webinars for professional development.

The Diocese of Savannah gives priority to the integration of faith and culture into all aspects of the educational atmosphere: mission, curriculum activities, discipline practices, handbooks and all avenues of

communication. Schools in the diocese of Savannah include prayer in the regular daily schedule and provide consistent opportunities for participation in liturgical and para-liturgical experiences. Annual retreats are planned for both school leadership and faculty. Student retreats are also planned. All meetings begin with prayer. This is also evidenced by Mass participation, Penance services, Stations of the Cross, Thanksgiving feasts, celebration of saints' feasts, etc.

The Diocese of Savannah designs and documents service programs to allow for social justice issues to be reflected on and addressed in light of the Gospel teachings. Student efforts as they participate in international, national, and local outreach activities are reported in the *SainTS* publication; as well as *The Southern Cross*, the diocesan newspaper.

The diocese provides religious formation on Catholic beliefs, values and traditions for all stakeholders – students, faculty and staff, board members and parents. Catechetical certification is required for all faculty members, including those who are not Catholic. School websites reflect each school's Catholic identity. Religious education programs in the elementary and secondary schools are strong and developmentally appropriate. Teachers at the secondary level must be degreed and certified in theology, with verification of continuing education in their area of concentration. Collaboration with the Office of Faith Formation ensures annual opportunities for workshops, speakers, and resource materials to assist teachers.

Schools throughout the diocese honor the artistic heritage of Catholicism by displaying religious art including icons and incorporating hymns of praise and worship into the community's experience. Sacramentals are visible in schools such as statues and crucifixes.

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

- The DEI conference allows for collegiality among faculty and administrators across the diocese. It also allows presenters, which include faculty members, to share best practices. Additionally, it provides an avenue for faculty members to earn PLU credits as well as catechist certification opportunities.

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

- Develop an overall plan that addresses technological needs across the diocese. While each individual school has a technology plan that is required and must be submitted to the CSO, the diocese itself does not have a plan.
- Develop a consistent high school curriculum across the diocese.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Diocese of Savannah has met the accreditation requirements for the "Teaching & Learning" standard.

Standard 4. Documenting & Using Results

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

Description:

The Diocese of Savannah uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly defined performance measures that yield valid and reliable results, including multiple measures of individual student achievement. The diocesan elementary schools use CTB/McGraw Hill Terra Nova 3 Complete Battery in grades 1 through 8, with the Plus Test administered in grades 2 through 8 and In-View administered in grades 3, 5, and 7. The high schools utilize PLAN, PSAT, SAT, and ACT to monitor and assess curricular effectiveness and student progress and to support class placement and college applications. In addition, the diocese assesses faith formation in the fifth, eighth, and eleventh grades using the measurable tool ACRE formulated by the NCEA.

The Terra Nova 3 testing results identify strengths and weaknesses within the diocese as well as within each elementary school. Since 2007-2008, the diocesan schools have been enrolled in the online reporting service TurnLeaf Achievement Management System (AMS), which allows administrators and teachers to create and share reports on any demographic, grade level performance, or targeted instructional area and to track longitudinal progress from any group or subgroup within the testing parameters.

Each school's individual profile is assessed by the CSO and by the individual administrators, teachers, parents, school board members, and in a limited manner, shared with students. Through such a collaborative network, measurable goals are developed by which student achievement is tracked and aligned with instructional effectiveness. Administrators and counselors communicate the data to ensure productive analysis by, creating projection analysis data, providing advisory boards with the diocesan and local testing results, helping parents to review home reports to better evaluate their child's progress at formal parent/teacher/student conferences, and promulgating data to the stakeholders through a variety of publications. The diocesan Curriculum Committee uses the data to develop and assess curriculum objectives, guide textbook selections, and encourage the most effective instructional practices.

The team noted that an air of collaboration exists between the CSO and elementary principals in interpreting test scores. Evidence of this collaboration was present in principal interviews concerning documentation of data. On an ongoing basis, the CSO's committee participates in conferences, webinars, or conference calls to ensure the accurate accounting of the data. In turn, the administrators, counselors, and teachers are trained in the interpretation of the group, subgroup, and individual profiles of Terra Nova 3 results at administrators' meetings and through workshops and local school meetings, as well as at the DEI.

Also noted was that the ACRE was not regularly used as a resource to develop measurable goals in the Religion curriculum.

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

- The collection and analysis of multi-year trend data regarding student achievement and system effectiveness is communicated throughout the diocese and comparative analysis is used to assist in improving services to stakeholders.
- A variety of training opportunities on data analysis is available for individuals and groups. The inclusion of data interpretation and implementation is on the agenda annually for professional

development.

- The Catholic Diocese of Savannah evaluates student learning and organizational effectiveness using a variety of assessments. Disaggregation of assessment data reflects growth in system effectiveness, student performance, and relevant group analysis.
- The CSO, administrators, and teachers respect the moral teaching authority of the Catholic Church and use respectful measures to maintain student privacy when disseminating student performance.

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

- Collaborate with the Office of Faith Formation to analyze ACRE test results annually.
- Establish a plan for the submission of high school performance results annually.
- Communicate data and analysis on archdiocesan school website as appropriate.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Diocese of Savannah has met the accreditation requirements for the "Documenting & Using Results" standard.

Standard 5. Resource & Support Systems

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

Description:

The Diocese of Savannah employs a staff of 543 individuals charged with providing a quality educational experience to 5,504 students. The division has a well-defined recruitment and employment process led by the human resources department to ensure that each school and the diocesan offices are staffed sufficiently in number and expertise to meet the vision and purpose of the school system.

The diocese uses a formal recruiting process, including posting available positions within the diocese on the NCEA Job Bank and diocesan website as well as advertising in diocesan publications including church bulletins and the diocesan newspaper, *The Southern Cross*, to assure that the diocese puts a priority on the hiring of highly competent teachers. The Diocese of Savannah has benefited from the service program from the Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) offering college graduates the opportunity to serve as full-time teachers in under-resourced Catholic schools across the southern United States. Because of geographical expanse of the diocese, salary schedules are based on 75% of the average public school base, including state and local supplements, in the county in which the school is located.

The Quality Assurance Review (QAR) team noted that the schools are comprised of highly qualified, certified professionals and employees with a Temporary Education Certification (TEC). In addition, staff had completed significant training in areas that were specific to their assigned job duties.

According to information gleaned during the interviews and observations conducted, the diocese is experiencing a trend of steady student growth with increasing diversity. As this growth continues, more students and parents of different backgrounds and cultures will require the diocese to provide strategies for meeting additional needs of the population in order to continue to increase and maintain student achievement. It is important for educators to have knowledge and understanding of other cultures in order to maximize effectiveness to impact the achievement of these students. The CSO recognizes the need to

recruit and retain professional staff that more closely resembles the demographics of the diocese as well as to provide more diversity training and support for teachers at the classroom level.

Interviews indicated a desire by stakeholders to have more teachers who reflect the demographics of the diocese. The CSO has recognized this challenge and is establishing practices to enhance the diversity of the diocese's employees.

Orientations are provided at both the system and school level with an induction program being required of all new teachers and administrators to prepare them spiritually and professionally to be agents of change in Catholic education. Professional development efforts have been funded and strengthened over time and are continuous for all levels of employees. The CSO provides opportunities for teachers and administrators for professional development by hosting the DEI, an annual three-day retreat. Topics for the DEI are selected to challenge and inform teachers of new techniques and to further develop topics determined by the Staff Development Committee as important for academic growth and Catholic identity. Each school submits a local staff development plan. Other opportunities for professional development are offered throughout the year, both in-state and nationally, including NCEA conferences, programs funded by Title II-A and diocesan/school-sponsored events. Strong evidence was presented to the committee that professional development was research-based and data-driven.

Every teacher, regardless of teaching assignment, is required to obtain basic catechist certification, and teachers of religion must continue catechist certification beyond basic level. All teachers are expected to incorporate Catholic theology and practices in their teaching and activities across the curriculum. An evaluation system for teachers is in place, and peer review teams provide quality assurance. The diocesan system of evaluation and professional development is comprehensive and focused on helping teachers enjoy success in the classroom. All staff members are held accountable for their performance and job-related responsibilities that focus on student achievement.

Support systems and personnel are provided to ensure services in the areas of special education, alternative education, health, counseling, social work, school psychology, parental involvement, nutrition and wellness, multicultural diversity, and student conduct.

The Diocese of Savannah maintains and ensures financial accounts and practices in accordance with accepted audited accounting processes. School budgets are closely monitored at the local and diocesan levels to ensure financial needs are being met appropriately and in accordance with the mission. The 16 schools participating in diocese accreditation fund their operating revenues through a combination of tuition and fees revenues, subsidies from the parish/deanery, advancement/endowment efforts and community fundraising. The Grace Scholars, the Logan Lewis Grant, Negro American Scholarships and the Community Found of Central Georgia are examples of resources the diocese has obtained to support the vision and mission.

The budgetary process is interactive with short and long term budget projections of need. The process addresses needed personnel, educational resources, technology, and capital improvement. As part of the annual budget process, each school administrator analyzes the individual needs of his/her school with input from the local school finance committees. Diocesan staff meets with schools and conducts on-site visits to gather information on school needs for resources and support. The budget is presented by the superintendent to the Bishop who has final approval authority. Allocation and resources are aligned to meeting specific student needs. The CSO provides guidance and direction in securing federal Title Funding. Seventy one percent of diocesan schools utilize Title I funds for academic support and remediation to students; 53% of schools provide tutoring and mentoring programs.

Interviews with pastors, CSO personnel, staff, principals, parents, and students, provided clear and consistent concern of the financial sustainability of the Diocese of Savannah schools to ensure the delivery of quality programs; recruit and retention of quality administrators and teachers and; support physical resources. The QAR team strongly suggests the CSO develop and implement both immediate and long-term diocesan advancement plans to establish financial viability/sustainability by including strategies for submitting grants, developing local capital improvement projects, raising funds for endowments, and providing greater levels of financial aid. This will ensure prospective students access to quality Catholic education.

Staff, stakeholder, and student interviews revealed the need to expand technology and the technical support to help ensure the students have the tools to achieve academic excellence which is the diocese's vision. A school that provides technology plans that are aligned to a long-term systemic diocesan technology plan will ensure ready access to instructional technology, information and media services, and materials needed for effective instruction and achievement in student learning. The present technology plans at the school level should be expanded to include strategies which coordinate and ensure ready access to instructional technology, research information, and media services necessary for effective technological instruction to prepare students for life and work in the 21st century. The QAR team encourages the diocese to maintain up-to-date technology in classroom equipment and sufficient technology infrastructure to support student achievement.

Through evidence of support service delivery, financial and human resource documentation, and staff interviews, it was apparent that the diocese has taken steps to address student health needs, guidance services, and physical wellness activities in support of the student's complete education program.

The provision of safe and orderly environments throughout the diocese was substantiated through school visits and interviews with staff, students, and stakeholders. Facilities are well-maintained, clean, and attractive, fostering a climate conducive to learning. General maintenance is conducted on an ongoing basis. Aggressive efforts to address aging buildings are being considered through fund raising efforts. Individual school safety plans help ensure student and staff safety. The diocese and each school prepare emergency and crisis management plans with appropriate training for all stakeholders in conjunction with local law enforcement and fire safety departments. The nurturing, caring environment is a precursor to high level learning and teaching. When teachers and students are comfortable in their work and learning environments, increased student learning is enhanced.

Website and communication resources (School Reach, newsletters, telephone conferences calls, and bulletins) are maintained at both the local and diocesan levels.

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

- The dedication of the faculty, staff, and administration in each school illustrate the commitment to the mission of Catholic education in Savannah, Georgia..
- The diocese has recruitment, induction and training processes that result in maintaining a highly committed qualified staff.
- The diocese has responded to data analysis by providing quality professional development that supports stated goals and equips teachers and administrators to better meet the needs of students.
- Commitment is demonstrated to maintaining updated and adequate facilities that support instructional needs and population growth.
- The administration, faculty, and staff are committed, dedicated, and focused on meeting the needs of all students.
- The CSO assures that teachers and staff understand that, as Catholic educators, their task is a vocation and ministry.

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

- Recruit and retain professional staff that more closely resembles the demographics of the diocese.
- Develop school technology plans that are aligned to a long-term systemic technology plan to ensure the integration of technological resources in both instructional delivery and student learning opportunities.
- Develop and implement a diocesan advancement plan to establish financial viability/sustainability by including strategies for submitting grants, develop local capital improvement projects, raising funds for endowment and provide greater levels of financial aid.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Diocese of Savannah has met the accreditation requirements for the "Resource & Support Systems" standard.

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications & Relationships

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

Description:

The Diocese of Savannah has done an excellent job of fostering communication and collaboration among the principals to improve student learning. The superintendent and assistant superintendent communicate directly and through the use of technology. Scheduled meetings, school visits and diocesan CDs and templates are used to communicate educational expectations and policies. The quarterly principals' meetings have resulted in effective communication that fosters continued collaboration among school administrators.

Principals are knowledgeable and supportive of the online data analysis program and are using data to communicate educational successes to stakeholders, identify diocesan and individual school trends and to support staff development decisions. A variety of techniques are used at the diocesan and local school levels to inform internal audiences. The diocesan newspaper, local newsletters, websites, and individual conferences are used to communicate school and student accomplishments. Identification of external audiences and communication is not as well developed for the elementary schools as it is for the secondary schools. Evidenced by one secondary school was a formalized Development Plan that has resulted in the establishment of partnerships with community based organizations to enhance student learning.

While individual schools frequently use surveys to gather input and communicate with local stakeholders, a diocesan-wide survey has yet to be developed and distributed to all stakeholders. Analysis of survey input for the current study was difficult because surveys were not standardized. Future plans indicate a focused attempt to improve the process of gathering input.

Principals and teachers felt their input was solicited and informed the current study. Some pastors expressed that they were not involved in the process and indicated a desire for an ongoing, system-wide approach to enhance communication.

The majority of principals felt their schools were making effective attempts to communicate with parents

and parishioners. There was an expressed need for diocesan marketing and financial plans to address long-term school stability.

The Catholic schools in the Diocese of Savannah are viewed as strong academic institutions by students, parents and parishioners. Students felt academic expectations were clearly communicated and that they were being prepared for the next level of education. They cited several incidents where their voices were heard and their input informed decisions. Frequent communication has resulted in parents feeling welcome and informed about school events. Parents are invited and involved in the life of the school and serve on many action committees. They were knowledgeable about their students' academic performance and the accomplishments of the entire student body. Conscious attempts are being made to keep parishioners informed about school events and accomplishments. Parish bulletins contain news about school events and student accomplishments.

Catholic identity of the schools continues to be regarded as a strength by stakeholders.

There is an acute awareness of the benefits of the effective communication and collaboration established by the diocesan leadership and a desire to expand the process to all stakeholders.

Collaboration and communication between teachers and schools is valued as one of many benefits of the DEI.

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

- The diocese has developed a process for principal meetings that has resulted in effective communication and collaboration between the CSO, the principals, and teachers.
- Principals feel trusted, empowered, and have a sense of principal efficacy that allows them to face the future with hope and determination, despite limited resources and challenges.
- A variety of techniques are used to keep parents and parishioners informed about school accomplishments.

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

- Standardize diocesan school surveys so data can be accurately analyzed and results used to inform decisions.
- Devise a diocesan system for communication and collaboration of all stakeholders.
- Continue to use parents to promote and communicate the centrality of Catholic identity.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Diocese of Savannah has met the accreditation requirements for the "Stakeholder Communications & Relationships" standard.

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

Description:

The CSO leads the way in modeling a continuous process of improvement that articulates the vision and purpose for school improvement. The schools in the Diocese of Savannah strive to meet the indicator of implementing an atmosphere of improvement by collaboration with ongoing professional development for both administrators and teachers each year with the DEI. With ongoing professional development, educators evaluate the curriculum to align with constant school improvement that is critical for student learning. The approach of improving efforts for sustained growth in student performance and school effectiveness is important for success and is nurtured at both the diocesan and local school level. New improved academic efforts are guided by the results of Terra Nova testing.

The stakeholders focus on continuous school improvement by bringing together both administrators and faculty with the DEI, bi-monthly administrators meetings, annual retreats, and annual individual school visits by the CSO. The annual school visit to each school affirms the unique identity of each school with an opportunity for discussions that will guide and assist the principal through areas of change.

Communication between stakeholders is imperative to aligning the vision of the system between the schools. Unique to this diocese is the geographic expanse of the school locations and the diverse student populations that create distinctive challenges. To insure that continuous improvement occurs, reviewing the vision annually maintains the focus on continuing school improvement for curriculum using the Georgia state standards. At the local level, staff meetings are held to plan curriculum based on the standards that are unique to the individual schools. The dedication to continuous improvement is evident by the commitment to professional development of the CSO, principals and teachers at the annual DEI.

Collaboration has enabled the CSO to work with the Curriculum Committee comprised of teachers and administrators to discuss issues of school improvement. The Curriculum Committee reviews, develops, and articulates standards based on clearly defined expectations of student learning that incorporates Catholic values in each subject area. School personnel set a SIP and annual goals based on student performance. By examining the data, each school creates a systematic plan for school improvement based on the analysis of data and works toward the attainment of the vision and purpose of the school. Individual schools, with the input from teachers, establish measurable objectives which are outlined in each school's improvement plan and allow each school to reflect and self-assess the results. The focus begins with the Bright From The Start program for 3 & 4 year old children.

The use of standardized testing results guides the process of individual school improvement. Each year the administration and teachers review the level of student improvement from previous years. Collaborative review of the vision that incorporates the SIPs with academic goals, results in staff development plans that are tied to student improvement. Review and analysis of performance data, and continuous attention to student achievement ensures implementation of a school wide improvement plan. Regular collaboration with committees and administration provide leadership opportunities for all teachers in the school improvement process at the classroom, building and district level. Data collection and analysis provide the evidence that the student learning needs are being met and the achievement gap is narrowing between current and expected student performance levels. The process is a systematic plan implemented by the diocese which establishes guidelines that individual schools follow when developing school improvement

plans. The CSO ensures that school personnel are provided professional development and technical assistance to implement interventions and achieve improvement goals.

The CSO and local leadership communicate the results of improvement efforts to its stakeholders through the dissemination of documented progress on Terra Nova test scores. The new CTB online reporting system affords each school the unlimited amount of data to be utilized in decisions regarding curriculum mapping and special instruction. The information is then made available to parents, board members, and other stakeholders. The CSO and Administrators communicate all data to highlight progress, needs, and areas of improvement.

Continuous school improvement is an ongoing process that helps schools focus their efforts in support of their mission and goals. The system takes responsibility for a process that requires personnel to set annual goals. Student performance and school data are analyzed and used to develop plans that ensure all students are learning and progressing toward achievement of academic standards. Continuous school improvement is research based, data driven, and teacher lead. Each year, the CSO, in conjunction with the diocesan Staff Development Committee, provide quality professional growth opportunities for all educational personnel at the DEI. In addition professional development occurs during quarterly meetings and at the local level throughout the year.

The Catholic Schools Office allocates and protects time for planning that support student learning by scheduling events with yearly calendars. Emphasis is placed on the annual DEI gathering that allows teachers to gain information and engage in professional discussions with colleagues. Teachers also unite in spiritual formation that include prayer services and mass.

The CSO works with the Curriculum Committee in the various areas of curriculum each year using state and national standards as well as other Catholic diocesan curriculums. The Curriculum Committee reviews, develops, and articulates standards based on clearly defined expectations for student learning that insures a Catholic component.

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

- The CSO provides a culture of continuous improvement focused on student achievement which is data-driven and researched-based. Continuous improvement is anchored by data analysis.
- The CSP exhibits leadership that engages all principals to be part of the continuous process of system wide improvement. Commitment to continuous improvement is then shared at the local level with individual faculties who collaborate to increase student achievement based on individual school data and cultural differences.
- Principals are empowered to share in the vision in the diocese to create a unified educational program.

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

- Develop a diocesan-wide plan to collect and collate information with all stakeholders about information that ultimately results in increased student services.
- Strengthen the relationship between local teachers and diocesan leadership for continued dialogue throughout the school year for continuous improvement.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Diocese of Savannah has met the accreditation requirements for the "Commitment to Continuous Improvement" standard.

Quality Assurance Findings

The Quality Assurance Review Team examined the effectiveness of the district's methods for quality assurance. The team reviewed the district's practices and methods to monitor and document improvement, provide meaningful feedback and support across the district, ensure that AdvancED standards are met and strengthened, and regularly collect, use, and communicate results. The team provides the following findings in this area.

Description

The CSO has been able to monitor and document school improvement through the utilization of the accreditation processes of both the FCC and SACS.

As required by the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Savannah, the diocesan elementary schools have been regulated by FCC accreditation standards since 1995. All high schools in the diocese were SACS accredited, and some elementary schools have held dual accreditation with FCC and SACS. The SIPs generated by the accreditation process are reviewed and approved by the CSO prior to submission to the accrediting agency.

The SACS accreditation standards specifically facilitate ongoing improvement for the high schools. Implementation of the SIP is the foundation for continuous improvement, along with the goals set collaboratively with the SACS visiting team. A second year progress report is required of each of the high schools, which outlines the ways in which they have been pursuing the goals set at the original SACS visit. This report works to keep continuous improvement at the forefront of the school's efforts, and is a part of the ongoing dialogue between the high schools and SACS through the re-accreditation process.

The annual CSO formal visit to both elementary and high schools, the meeting with the school administration and pastor for administrator evaluation, and the subsequent report further provide for a valid system to oversee and monitor effectiveness.

The Diocese of Savannah CSO offers support and constructive feedback to the schools by means of the review of all the accreditation documents; by validating all information provided in the online ARCA prior to review by the FCC Board at its December meeting; by presence at the formal FCC Third Year Review panel; by review of local board constitutions and handbooks; and by guidance with the interpretation and implementation of all policy matters.

An annual school visit by the superintendent and/or assistant superintendent provides an opportunity for additional evaluation and assistance. During this visit there is an established protocol that provides a component of accountability and the subsequent written report provides valuable feedback. The superintendent meets with the pastor or board chair and the principal to discuss and complete the annual administrator review.

The fact that an accreditation process has been in place for fifteen years communicates the CSO's commitment to be involved in the process of each school's continuous improvement. The current initiative for district accreditation emphasizes the commitment to the cohesive spirit of the diocesan schools despite the geographic expanse of the diocese.

Going forward, the diocese and schools will use the SACS standards to guide diocesan and school planning, and continued compliance with FCC standards will form the framework for quality assurance. Yearly ARCA reports, first, second, and third year reports will continue, and the formation and implementation of school improvement plans on a five-year rotation will remain in place.

While SACS team visits are envisioned to continue for the two high schools, there will be an intentional focus to incorporate at least one or two team members from this diocese and/or from another diocese that has experienced diocesan accreditation. Also, the CSO will now be present for the high school SACS team visit, to receive the oral exit report. The QAR teams for the elementary schools will no longer be assigned by FCC, but will be comprised of Savannah schools' personnel as well as invited members from neighboring dioceses and/or school systems.

Thus, a reliance on collaboration to form and inform efforts at continuous improvement, as well as the resources of FCC and AdvancED, will direct schools for the future. The CSO and the schools will utilize a model of annual review of the schools' adherence to curricular and professional standards. The CSO and local school communities will implement and evaluate the present action plan, and together will accomplish the primary goal of providing authentically Catholic schools committed to academic excellence.

The regular collection of results, based on annual goals and on the school improvement plans, is accomplished through the FCC and SACS reporting processes, to which the CSO has access and does a review. Diocesan and local school leadership are integral parts of the improvement plan and the driving force of implementation, while monitoring the achievement of the SIP. Beginning with surveys and committees and progressing to determination of needs, as well as development and implementation of plans, all stakeholders are included in the process. Communication is established by diocesan and local leadership with collaborative teams, and accomplished through dissemination of documented progress, test scores, board reports, and newsletters. Websites, email, and telephone alerts also aid in the publication and implementation of new ideas. The diocesan website especially provides a wealth of information to all stakeholders.

In addition, annual school visits, which include conversation with administrators, faculty, board members/parents, and students, provide a productive avenue for sharing of insights, commendations, and recommendations. Well-planned and faithfully-attended administrator meetings and fully-functioning curriculum, policy, and staff development committees are also venues for shared communication on progress and needs.

Strengths

- A strong commitment to continuous improvement and quality assurance exists in the Diocese of Savannah as evidenced by the CSO's annual visits to schools, the DEI, ongoing analysis of assessment data, and school improvement planning.
- A strong system of quality assurance exists with the FCC and SACS processes, and the diocese and schools will continue to utilize them during the transition to the diocesan internal quality assurance process.

Opportunities

- Identify a high school administrator/educator to serve on the Steering Committee to provide expertise and facilitate alignment between the elementary and secondary SACS QAR processes.
- Develop the timeline and process to transition from FCC to Diocese of Savannah CSO assigned QAR teams.

Schools Visited

The Quality Assurance Review team visited the following schools during the visit to the Diocese of Savannah on 12/05/2010 - 12/08/2010.

Sacred Heart School	250 South Davis Drive	Warner Robbins	Georgia	31088
Aquinas High School	1920 Highland Avenue	Augusta	Georgia	30904-5305
Saint Francis Xavier Catholic School	1121 Union Street	Brunswick	Georgia	31520
St. Anne-Pacelli Catholic School	2020 Kay Circle	Columbus	Georgia	31907-3299
Saint Peter Claver Catholic School	133 Ward Street	Macon	Georgia	31204
Saint Francis Cabrini Catholic School	11500 Middleground Road	Savannah	Georgia	31419
Saint Mary on the Hill Catholic School	1220 Monte Sano Avenue	Augusta	Georgia	30904

Conclusion

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

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

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

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Mrs. Leisa Schulz, CHAIR (Archdiocese of Louisville)
- Dr. Kathryn Wood, VICE_CHAIR (Queen of Angels School)
- Ms. Holly Goodwin, MEMBER (Diocese of Colorado Springs)
- Mrs. Karen Smith, MEMBER (St. John Regional Catholic School)
- Dr. Maria Ojeda, MEMBER
- Sister Jane Herb, MEMBER (Diocese of Albany)
- Mrs. Linda Cherry, MEMBER (Diocese of Charlotte)
- Ms. Donna Kanowitz, MEMBER (Diocese of Metuchen)

AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems

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

Vision and Purpose

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

Governance and Leadership

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

Teaching and Learning

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

Documenting and Using Results

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

Resource and Support Systems

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

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

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

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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