

**Report of the  
Quality Assurance Review Team  
for  
Seminole County Elementary School**

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

# Quality Assurance Review Report

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Accreditation Recommendation.** The Quality Assurance Review Team uses the findings from the onsite visit to make an accreditation recommendation that is reviewed by the 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 SACS CASI Georgia State Office (SACS-CASI-GA), a division of AdvancED, visited the Seminole County Elementary School in Donalsonville, Georgia, United States on 05/10/2011 - 05/11/2011.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 3 members of the administrative team, 15 students, 12 parents, and 55 teachers. In addition, the media specialist, counselors, the instructional lead teacher, testing coordinator, and parent liaison were interviewed. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the school. Specifically, the team examined the school's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

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

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

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

### Commendations

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

- **The school collaborates with the district in consistently and effectively promoting parenting skills by offering a wide variety of quality parental involvement and training opportunities.**

Interviews with parents, teachers, and support staff indicated that the school offers a wide variety of parental involvement through such activities as helping families establish home environments to support children as students, family literacy classes, family support programs to assist with health and nutrition, English translation for Hispanic parents, and sessions to help parents understand the Criterion Referenced Competency Test. The school also employs a parent liaison and maintains a parent resource room in the building.

The variety of programs which focus on family literacy and parenting skills offered at the school during the

school year provides support to parents so that their children can be successful in school.

- **The school maintains a high level of weekly school to home communication.**

Teacher, parent, student, and administrator interviews as well as a perusal of artifacts revealed that the school electronically communicates weekly to every student's home via telephone and each teacher posts homework assignments, grades, discipline notices, and other pertinent information concerning their classroom's activities for the week.

Multiple communication networks give stakeholders convenient access to pertinent information in order to become active participants in their child's school.

- **The school preserves and implements protected common planning time across all grade levels during the school day.**

During interviews, the leadership team and other teachers expounded on the value of protected common planning time. The team observed that through flexible and innovative scheduling, all grade levels have protected common collaborative planning time during school hours.

Common planning time allows teachers to address the academic needs of students on a daily basis and to participate in professional development related to identified needs. This common planning time affords teachers the opportunity to discuss assessment data, examine student work, develop benchmark assessments, and align curriculum for best instructional practices.

## Required Actions

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

- **Ensure that teacher's collaborative planning sessions are structured and scheduled on a regular and frequent basis in order to addresses what students should know, understand, and be able to do to master the Georgia Performance Standards.**

Interviews with faculty indicated that daily common planning time is provided and grade level teachers meet monthly to collaborate as a learning team. However, only 52% of the faculty indicated on the Certified Staff Survey that teachers consistently meet to collaborate and 53% agreed that there is not an ongoing systematic focus on curriculum, assessment, and instruction during these collaborative meetings.

Ensuring that collaborative planning sessions are structured, scheduled on a regular basis, and focused on assessment, curriculum, and instruction will prove of great benefit in ensuring that teachers work together to attain a high level of consensus concerning what all learners should know, do, and understand. It will also provide an opportunity for teachers to collaboratively develop assessments and analyze data to plan for learning and to adjust instruction, as needed.

- **Intensify efforts to target research-based instructional practices that promote high expectations for**

**all students, especially African-American, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students.**

The school's state report card indicated that the 2008, 2009, and 2010 Average Yearly Progress (AYP) reports identified African-American, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students as having a lower percentage of students meeting and exceeding the state standards, especially in mathematics.

African-American students and students with disabilities scoring below average on state mandated tests as identified subgroups of 40 or more students will certainly affect the school's AYP status if the groups' performance does not meet the established Annual Measurable Objective on state assessments.

- **Implement a systematic process for reviewing and analyzing the school's vision annually in order to keep the school's improvement efforts current.**

During interviews, teachers stated that the vision and mission statements had been reviewed, but not revised for years prior to the school's Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards Analysis and AdvancED Self Assessment.

The school's mission and vision, the vehicle which drives the comprehensive improvement plan, should be reviewed annually in collaboration with stakeholders to evaluate progress and to engage in visionary planning for the education of all students.

- **Develop a detailed written school improvement plan.**

The perusal of the school's 2010-2011 Compensatory Education School-Wide Improvement Plan and interviews with teachers and administration revealed that the school's improvement plan is broad in scope and fails to address both short and long range goals.

A school-wide improvement plan that is well written, developed by the instructional leadership team with input from all stakeholders, that both identifies and addresses learning gaps indicated from a continuous data analysis process, and that includes specific and measurable short range and long range goals will help the school consistently monitor student achievement and communicates a focus on continuous improvement.

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

## Next Steps

The school should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all stakeholders.
2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the commendations section to maximize their impact on the school.
3. Develop action plans to address the required actions made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the required actions.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the school's efforts to improve student performance and school

effectiveness.

5. Following the Quality Assurance Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the required actions. The report will be reviewed at the state and national level to ensure that significant progress is being made toward the required actions. Lack of progress can result in a change in accreditation status.
6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

## Resources

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

## Celebrating Accreditation

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

## Summary

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



# Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

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

## Standard 1. Vision and Purpose

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

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

The school has demonstrated commitment to a vision and purpose that provides direction to its educational endeavors. The mission and vision statements were reviewed, but not revised as the school began its Standards Assessment Review at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school term. The school's Self Assessment and Quality Assurance Review Team interviews indicated that a focus team comprised of administrators, teachers, students, and community members met numerous times throughout the present decade and solicited input from all stakeholders. Interviews confirmed that the vision and mission statements were generated from a grass roots approach reflecting the community's desire to maintain a school with a mission that would provide a safe, nurturing atmosphere in which to guide an ever increasingly diverse student body through a rigorous, content-rich, hands-on curriculum with character enrichment and civic responsibility. High standards of teaching, study, and conduct are central to the mission of the school's standards that has led to academic excellence. Stakeholders clearly voiced that the school should and does provide an outstanding and equitable education for every student, regardless of socio-economic status, race, neighborhood, or family structure Stakeholders feel that this education will establish a foundation for lifelong success. Stakeholders also stated that the school's mission and vision statements have served the school well in the past and did not need to be revised at the present time. However, with ever changing demographics and changes in State curriculum, the team notes a need for the school and its stakeholders to review the vision and mission statements on a yearly basis.

The team learned through interviews, observations, and artifact review that the school has clearly defined expectations for student learning that are aligned with the school's vision and supported by all stakeholders. The Georgia Performance Standards are taught daily by skilled and knowledgeable teachers. The school's profile was examined by the team and was found to comprehensively represent the school, its students, and the school community. The school has initiated a collection of demographic and student achievement data for use in continuous improvement planning. The school monitors compliance with accreditation standards and is commended for establishing protected common collaborative planning time during the school day across all grade levels. However, teacher interviews and artifact review indicated that the common collaborative planning sessions are not structured. The QAR team suggests that the planning sessions need to be structured and scheduled on a regular and frequent basis and designed to promote depth of understanding, rigor, and relevance in all subject areas and also to provide opportunities for teachers to design and implement curriculum, improve instructional strategies, determine desired results for student learning, use assessment data to align and adjust instruction, review and analyze student work, and develop common assessments.

The school monitors and makes progress in meeting goals and standards for student performance. This is evidenced by statistics indicating that the school has met federal and state Average Yearly Progress standards for nine consecutive years and has been named a Title I Distinguished School for having met AYP for 7 consecutive years. Federal and state guidelines and mandates are adhered to and the results of improvement efforts are effectively communicated to stakeholders. Professional learning is made available to school personnel to support improvement goals and strategies. Evidence of compliance with this standard is found throughout the student and faculty handbooks, school improvement plans, technology plan, and on the school's website. Each of these publications incorporate the mission and vision as the foundation for action and policies. Stakeholder involvement is evident in the preparation and development of the mission and vision through surveys distributed to solicit stakeholder input from the School Council, Board of Education meetings, and Parent Teacher Organization meetings.

Through interviews with stakeholders, the team found that stakeholders are extremely knowledgeable of the school's mission and found that individuals philosophically support and use the school's mission and vision to guide their work as they maintain and monitor student progress and establish a focus on quality teaching and learning.

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

- The school recognizes a need for continuous improvement in student performance.
- The school utilizes multiple methods of disseminating information to its stakeholders.
- Stakeholders demonstrate involvement in and knowledge of school-wide improvement goals.

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

- Review the vision and mission statements annually.
- Utilize a more structured collaborative planning process to complement the protected time that is given to staff members during school hours.

**Finding:** Seminole County Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

## Standard 2. Governance and Leadership

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

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

The district makes the appropriate policies and procedures for the school system and allows the school principal to conduct the day-to-day operations of the school. The administration takes into account all stakeholders' needs (students, teachers, staff, parents, community) and solicits opinions of these groups to effectively manage the daily operation of the school. The board provides funds for appropriate staff and provides needed instructional supplies, equipment, and physical needs to support effective teaching and learning. The local board of education conducts business in accordance with Georgia state law. Stakeholder interviews indicated that the school administration is accessible to the parents, faculty, students, and community and executes the desires and concerns of all stakeholders. Shared leadership is an

evident practice. A highly qualified and effective staff is engaged in data-based decision making. The principal empowers teachers to be leaders in their respective grades as grade level chairs and serving on the school's leadership team. A continuum of actions by the principal, assistant principal, and all faculty and staff working together in protected common collaborative planning during school hours enables teachers to discuss assessment data, examine students' individual work, and align the curriculum for best instructional practices. However, the team suggests that these common planning times be better structured to maximize these opportunities to improve learning.

The local board has articulated a process that clearly identifies the responsibility of the administration of school policies and procedures. The principal is given the responsibility and authority to develop teacher handbooks, student handbooks, and school-level procedures to govern the school within the framework of the federal, state, and local board of education policies. The principal provides stakeholders with an analysis of student achievement and school performance results on statewide assessments, including the Criterion Referenced Competency Test and Georgia State Writing Assessment scores. Classroom teachers use quarterly report cards, mid-quarter reports, Online Assessment Systems (OAS), Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS) Observation Survey, and classroom data to identify students in need of additional academic support, as well as to guide the implementation of school-wide initiatives to strengthen skill deficiencies. The Quality Assurance Review Team suggests that the school intensifies their efforts to identify and implement strategies to target the lower achieving regular education students as well as students with disabilities. The perusal of three year trend data on the school's state report card indicated an achievement gap between black and white students and students with disabilities, especially in the area of mathematics.

Multiple sources of data are analyzed by teachers on a weekly basis. Student data is shared with each teacher in order to better meet the needs of the students. Teachers and administrators use this resource to help evaluate student performance and prepare strategies to aid student achievement. The data gained through this evaluation serve as a needs assessment for the school. The principal models expectations by conducting roundtable discussions with community leaders and parents to analyze the current state of the school. This discussion enables all stakeholders to communicate questions, concerns, and commendations.

Community stakeholders are provided opportunities to participate in the advancement of student learning through collaborative networking. School administrators integrate responses from parent, faculty, student, and community surveys into the school improvement plan. Professional development associated with standards-based classroom instruction and ongoing differentiation strategy training has provided teachers the opportunity to enhance and improve the teaching and learning process, but classroom observations by the team revealed that there is a much greater need for further professional development for all staff members in the disaggregation of data and differentiated learning strategies. Differentiation strategies were observed in only 30% of the classrooms visited.

Artifact reviews found that the school administrator complies with all accepted accounting principles, is fiscally responsible, and is a good steward of the school's resources. Interviews with school and community stakeholders reveal that the school's principal is highly respected and is recognized for her leadership style, her visibility, her accessibility, and her fiscal management techniques. She has surrounded herself with highly qualified professional educators and her demeanor inspires collaboration and excellence in the performance of duty. Teacher and parent interviews substantiate that the administrative staff models a collaborative working relationship that creates a culture and environment for teamwork by all stakeholders. Statements by students, staff, and parents revealed that they are kept abreast of student performance data on a weekly, monthly, and annual basis. The entire staff exhibits a commitment to increasing student achievement levels.

On the premise that all students can learn and all teachers successfully teach if given effective training in specific techniques, teachers are evaluated based on measurable student learning. Artifacts and interviews provide clear evidence of a formal evaluation system for certificated personnel as well as support staff and non-certificated employees. The principal and assistant principals are visible throughout the school and at activities sponsored by the school. The school's administration maintains a vision, mission, and direction that have brought about a very conducive teaching and learning environment and has an open door policy for students, staff, and parents. Students have an orderly, safe and nurturing environment.

Parents who were interviewed expressed their appreciation for the school administration's consistent review of all safety procedures and keeping outside doors locked. The administration, teachers and parents all believe that the school is safe and orderly. The team did observe a traffic flow problem around the school. Interviews with the administration revealed there were ongoing discussions taking place to eliminate this problem.

During classroom observations and teacher interviews, the team observed that the entire school has a plethora of 21st century technology, but that this technology is not being fully utilized. Classroom observations revealed the effective use of technology by teachers in instruction in only 20% of classes. Faculty interviews indicated a desire for further training in the use of the Promethean Boards to enhance instruction.

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

- A strong and very positive relationship exists between the school administration and the teaching staff, parents, and community stakeholders. This results in open and transparent communication.

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

- Structure the common planning time to maximize opportunities to improve learning.
- Provide professional learning opportunities for all staff in differentiation strategies, data disaggregation, and implementing modern technology into classroom instruction.
- Intensify efforts to alleviate the traffic flow problem around the school.

**Finding:** Seminole County Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

## Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

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

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

The Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) are followed by all teachers as a means to align the curriculum for the students. To ensure understanding of the implementation of these standards, teachers have participated in GPS training. Teachers work closely with the district curriculum coordinator to ensure the proper alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Teachers serve on district and grade specific

curriculum committees. These committees meet to discuss areas of concern regarding the alignment of the standards and curriculum. Curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments are discussed and reviewed at grade group meetings. As a result of the analysis of curriculum and assessment, research-based instructional approaches, improvements, and activities are utilized to support achievement for all learners. Teachers use curriculum mapping documents for each nine week's grading period to clearly define expectations of student learning. Units of study have been developed in all content areas to align with the GPS. However, teacher interviews, classroom observations, and a review of state report card data indicate a need for school staff to further address efforts in all academic areas to close achievement gaps. The team's perusal of the school-wide improvement plan found it to be broad in scope and it did not target the achievement gaps of subgroups, especially in mathematics. Low test scores on state mandated tests will ultimately affect the school's AYP status.

Teachers can access the curriculum mapping documents through the school district web page, emails from the curriculum director, and curriculum guides. Research indicates that teachers should be engaged in in-depth, focused professional learning that promotes the sustained development of teachers' deep understanding of content knowledge, research-based instructional strategies, and assessment practices. Teachers have the opportunity to explore and utilize current research-based methods in the classroom. The QAR team observed differentiation of instructions in only 30% of the classrooms although 86% of teachers indicated on the Certified Staff Survey (CSS) that they provide differentiated instruction consistently.

The staff uses pre-assessment data to help drive instruction and target students in need of remediation. Ongoing assessments, running records, Georgia's Online Assessment System (OAS), and pre and post chapter tests help drive instruction throughout the year. Data are analyzed and teachers make modifications as needed so that all students are successful. Interviews with the administration and faculty indicate a desire for additional professional learning to disaggregate school data at the school level.

Students in need of additional support services are provided assistance by several resource teachers: Gifted and Talented Education (GATE), Intervention Specialists, Reading Recovery (RR), Early Intervention Program (EIP), and Response to Intervention (RTI). Students are also afforded extended day learning opportunities each afternoon. The administration protects instructional time by creating schedules that support and maximize student learning. Interruptions are kept to a minimum by having announcements made only in the morning and afternoon. Administration communicates via email and principal messengers.

Instructional time is given top priority and maximized to the fullest. To ensure that teachers are well prepared and effectively implementing the curriculum, teachers submit lesson plans weekly identifying curriculum goals. However, a perusal of lesson plans revealed that there is not a standard format used throughout the school. A review of teacher's lesson plans and classroom observations revealed lesson/units were clearly aligned with the GPS in 89% of the classrooms visited and learning goals were communicated to the student in 61% of classrooms.

The school offers a curriculum that is research-based with clearly defined measurable goals for student learning. Artifacts such as curriculum maps and pacing guides indicate that the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) serve as the framework for the school's curriculum. During the interview process, parents consistently articulated teachers' high expectations for achieving academic success. Through interviews and observations, the team found that all stakeholders, including parents, students, and community members, consider the faculty outstanding in its willingness to help students to be successful. Classroom visits revealed that critical thinking and problem solving skills are being emphasized in some classrooms. Classroom visits by the QAR team indicate promotion or 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 apply to their learning in only 22% of the classrooms. Word Walls were visible in most classes. The school demonstrates the use of instructional strategies, innovations and activities that are research-based and reflective of best practice. However, the QAR team observed technology being effectively integrated into instruction in only 20% of classrooms visited and students were using technology effectively in only 20% of the classrooms.

The school offers after-school remediation programs, teacher tutoring sessions, Response to Intervention, and extended learning time periods during the school day to ensure the needs of struggling students are identified and being met. State mandated test score data reviewed by the team revealed an achievement gap for black students as well as students with disabilities in reading and mathematics. The team did not see evidence of plans for the school to take immediate responsive action to close these achievement gaps, as these subgroups scoring below average will affect Average Yearly Progress (AYP).

The school allocates and protects instructional time to support student learning. According to the school's Self Assessment, the administrative team has developed policies, practices, and procedures to protect instructional time and kept the school focused on student learning. For content areas which data reveal to be areas of concern, designated time for horizontal collaboration has been established through common planning time. The school monitors its climate and takes appropriate steps to ensure that it is conducive to student learning. A universal discipline plan is in place to ensure a safe and positive school climate. Parents report that they are supported by faculty and administration in every way and that all teachers are easily accessible to them.

The school provides comprehensive information and media services that support the curricular and instructional programs. According to the school's Self Assessment, the school's media center maintains a comprehensive, balanced information, and mass communication collection of current media, books, reference sources, and periodicals in print and electronic formats that support student learning, the curriculum, and the instructional program. The media center staff provides training on effective use of a variety of media resources. In collaboration with the instructional staff and technical specialist, the media center staff provides materials and information to support classroom instruction. The school ensures that all school and staff members have regular and ready access to computers and a comprehensive materials collection that support the curricular and instruction program. The school houses three computer labs and has a prevalence of modern technology for instructional purposes in every classroom. Classroom observations and teacher interviews revealed that Promethean boards have been recently placed throughout the school, but professional learning to better use this technology is needed.

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

- Stakeholders' commitment to a quality education is prevalent.
- The learning environment is safe, clean, and orderly.
- Faculty and staff are fully committed to improving student achievement.
- Common planning times are provided and protected for all grade levels during the school day.
- The school employs a myriad of intervention strategies on a daily basis.
- Teacher's lesson plans and classroom observations revealed lesson/units were clearly aligned with the GPS in 89% of the classrooms visited.

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

- Implement a process for teachers to create professional development plans focused on growth needs as identified in the school improvement plan.

- Revisit the school-wide improvement plan and specifically target low performing subgroups.
- Provide more opportunities for teachers to learn about differentiation strategies.
- Evaluate the benefits of using a standard lesson plan format to ensure that Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) are aligned to lessons and are clearly visible and articulated throughout instruction.
- Take immediate and responsive action to close the achievement gaps, as subgroups scoring below average will affect Average Yearly Progress (AYP).
- Expand efforts to pursue creation of professional learning communities as a further means of analyzing data to develop and modify instructional practices and curriculum plans.
- Increase the use of differentiated instruction by supporting students with their instructional needs based on students' readiness levels, learning styles, and interests.
- Ensure collaborative planning is exercised across grade levels with fidelity.

**Finding:** Seminole County Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

## Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results

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

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

The school evidences documenting and using results for assessing progress throughout their academic program. The school has established performance measures for student learning that yield information that is reliable, valid, and bias free. The school has a comprehensive assessment system in place that documents performance and uses the results to develop strategies to improve student performance and teacher effectiveness. Interviews with the leadership team, support staff, and teachers indicated within individual classrooms, teachers are using a variety of assessments and adjusting instruction based on the results. However, classroom observations revealed that this was being done in only 30% of the classrooms to help differentiate the needs of students. In addition to summative data, the school utilizes formative assessments that include questioning for understanding, conferencing with students and summarizing activities. In particular, the school is using formative data to help meet the challenges of an increasingly diverse population of students with disabilities, ELL, and economically disadvantaged. The team's perusal of the school's state report card revealed that these subgroups are presently scoring below the state average on Criterion Referenced Competency Test .

The team saw some evidence that the school uses a wide variety of diagnostic assessment data to identify learning gaps and to adjust instruction for these targeted subgroups. Interviews with the school leadership, support staff, and teachers indicated that summative and formative assessment data are being utilized to assess student performance and analyze instructional effectiveness. The QAR team suggests that the school expand the use of diagnostic assessment at the lesson or unit level as a systematic way to determine background knowledge and skills to revise instruction for all learners and to identify related instructional interventions, including the use of flexible grouping.

Student data is gathered throughout the school year and the school has a designated data room where assessment data and demographic data can be displayed yearly for teacher review. Staff uses the data to drive the school improvement plan, to determine if school-wide goals are being met, and to determine if

teachers' meet their yearly professional and student achievement goals. Interviews with the administration and staff indicate that disaggregated data is given to the school from the central office personnel on an annual basis. The QAR team suggests that additional professional learning in the analysis of data at the school level will improve instruction and student performance.

The school communicates the results of student performance and school effectiveness to all stakeholders. The school uses an electronic portal, I-Parent, to which school leaders, teachers, students and parents have appropriate access to student and school test data and grades. The school communicates results of students' performances and school effectiveness via progress reports sent every 4.5 weeks and report cards at the 9 week period, as well as individual CRCT scores at the end of the year. In addition, the school distributes information to external stakeholders through the school's website, daily phone calls to parents, the local newspaper, School Council meetings, parent workshops, Parent Teacher Organization meetings, and each grade level produces a weekly newsletter.

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

- The school has a designated data room to house all pertinent data for review by teachers.
- The school has a myriad of communication portals in which to inform all stakeholders of all aspects of the school.

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

- Intensify efforts to implement a formalized process of analyzing data to improve student learning and teacher effectiveness through the use of professional development in the use of data analysis software and professional learning communities.
- Involve teachers more extensively in collaboratively disaggregating and analyzing student work on a consistent basis during team meetings throughout the school year.
- Expand efforts to use a wide variety of diagnostic assessment data to identify learning gaps and to adjust instruction for targeted subgroups.
- Maintain the designated data room to display student achievement data in order to monitor student performance and guide the continuous improvement process.
- Increase the use of assessment data (diagnostic, formative and summative) to monitor and adjust instruction in order to maximize student achievement, ensure continuous improvement for individual learners and address achievement gaps; specifically between students with disabilities and regular education students.

**Finding:** Seminole County Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.



## Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems

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

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

The team's review of artifacts, classroom observations, and multiple interviews indicate that the school has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to support a strong curriculum and instructional program that reflects the vision of the school. The school employs and mentors qualified professional staff and assigns staff responsibilities based on qualifications as evidenced through data available through the master schedule. Interviews with support staff, teachers, parents, and the leadership team reveal a strong desire for stakeholders to collaborate to provide sufficient resources to ensure success for all students. In interviews, administrators, students, and parents note the strength of the teachers as one of the primary assets of the school and confirmation of such strength was evident in classroom visits. As observed in the classrooms and discussed in interviews with administrators, teachers, and parents, the district has recruited highly-qualified teachers, indicating that the recruiting process is effective. New teachers are provided a mentor and are evaluated through the Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program (GTEP) and teachers Classroom Analysis of State Standards (CLASS). The retention rate of highly-qualified teachers is very high.

The school encourages an increased focus on collaborative, professional relationships. Administrators work with teachers to keep certifications current and to provide professional development opportunities. Faculty, administrators, and support staff expressed support for self-sought professional development. Based upon interviews with stakeholders, the school board and administration of the school are involved in the system's budgetary planning process and financial regulations and procedures are in place to safeguard all financial transactions. Funds are distributed to staff based on the requests of individual dual teachers and teachers are free to seek supplemental funds from grants and other sources. Audits are conducted at random by outside auditors and the central office helps the school perform a self audit each year.

The team found an extremely inviting campus with manicured grounds, an award winning functional outdoor classrooms with vegetable gardens, and a very clean building. Facilities are well-maintained. Stakeholder interviews and team classroom observations revealed there is an abundance of 21st century technology throughout the school but many teachers did not display strong familiarity with and thoughtful use of technology. Interviews with teachers and administration revealed that Promethean boards have been purchased and are in place in all classrooms, but the team did not observe the boards being extensively used for instruction. The team did observe limited technology integration into classroom instruction as a result of prior professional learning. The staff would benefit from additional professional learning to incorporate technology into lessons to enhance instruction across all grade levels.

Artifact reviews indicated that safety management procedures are operational and emergency drills are practiced regularly. Teachers and parents interviewed expressed that they felt safe and secure in the building and that the school's front office staff exhibits a professional and friendly demeanor at all times. Programs are in place for students with special needs and challenges through special education programs, as the school houses students with a wide variety of needs. Grade level and resource teachers plan appropriate modifications designed to meet the needs of special education students. Guidance services are readily available to each student for counseling and mentoring. Interviews and examination of artifacts indicate close collaboration between guidance staff and teachers. The school is commended for

designing and using academic support structures such as extended day, Reading Recovery, Early Intervention Program (EIP), Gifted and Talented Education (GATE), and Pyramid of Intervention to meet the needs of students who are identified as at-risk of not meeting standards. The school has a strong Parent & Teacher Organization (PTO) that promotes the myriad of opportunities and services of the school.

The school has strong collaborative partnerships with outside agencies such as the Friendship United Methodist Church, The First Presbyterian Church, local hospital, public library, Department of Family & Children Services (DFACS), 4-H, State Farm Insurance, and Pizza Hut. Parents can request special education testing if they feel their child may qualify and teachers can begin the process informally through classroom differentiation with the input of other teachers and guidance counselors. When a need is established, Individual Education Plans are put into place by a committee involving teachers, parents, administrators, and transition coordinators. Such interventions are monitored and reevaluated on an annual basis. Medical needs are also documented through the use of health cards maintained by the school nurse.

The school collaborates with the school district and offers a wide variety of quality parental involvement workshops. Interviews with parents, teachers and support staff indicated that the school offers workshops such as family literacy classes, health and nutrition, English translation for Hispanic parents, and sessions to help parents understand the Criterion Referenced Competency Test. These workshops are designed to help establish better home environments to support students as children. The school also employs a parent liaison and maintains a parent resource room in the building.

The administration, faculty, and support staff are passionate about their work. The school's leadership team actively supports student achievement and teacher expertise. This commitment ensures that all students receive the educational services necessary for success.

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

- Guidance services effectively serve students and the school's staff and are proactive in meeting the needs of all students.
- Teachers are committed to delivering quality instruction.
- A positive and inviting school climate and a safe and orderly environment are evident.
- The school offers many programs to meet the needs of all students.
- The school has an award winning and a functional outdoor classroom.

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

- Intensify efforts to incorporate technology in instruction and student work across all grade levels.
- Expand professional learning to all teachers for technology integration into classroom activities to enhance instruction across all grade levels.

**Finding:** Seminole County Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

## Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

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

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

Based upon parent, teacher, and community interviews and documentation, the school uses a variety of communication strategies to support the school's educational efforts focused on teaching, student learning, and relationships. Information regarding expectations, policies, events, workshops, and achievement are provided to its diverse stakeholders. The school fosters effective communication and relationships with and among its various constituencies, including faculty and staff, parents and guardians, students, and community members. Stakeholders support student learning by participating in the development of strategic plans, completing surveys, and engaging in consistent and meaningful dialogue.

Interviews with principals, teachers, parents, and business community members not only validate the strengths of the school's myriad communication strategies, but also verify that collaboration, communication, and shared decision making are evident throughout all stakeholder groups. The school provides multiple avenues to create parent/stakeholder awareness. The school communicates with parents through grade level weekly newsletters, discipline and academic parental conferences, 4.5 and 9 week academic grade progress reports, and Parent Teacher Organization meetings. The school's web site and individual teacher web pages are frequently updated portals that provide extensive information about the school, such as pertinent information about grades, homework assignments, due dates, and other informational notices. The website also highlights programs and curriculum, accolades and awards, school demographic information, and a calendar of events. The school administrators read and tally results from various parent and community satisfaction surveys distributed annually. Artifacts revealed that recent surveys of parents indicate that school communications are currently valued by all stakeholders.

The school has partnered with local businesses and organizations. The school fosters collaboration with community stakeholders who provide enrichment opportunities through outside programs from the Friendship United Methodist Church, The First Presbyterian Church, local hospital, public library, Department of Family & Children Services (DFACS), 4-H, State Farm Insurance, and Pizza Hut.

The school administration has an open door policy and encourages stakeholders to make suggestions and comments and to state concerns. Interviews indicated that all stakeholders have a voice and a channel for communication. The team did not see evidence of plans to implement a student council to promote the input of students. Parents and community members say they feel welcome in the school. Interviews with parents indicated there is a non-structured school-wide volunteer program in place in order for parents to be more involved in all aspects and in all areas of the school. The QAR team suggests that the school establish strategies to increase volunteer opportunities for all stakeholders to be more involved. Other school improvement communication is fostered through parent-teacher conferences, workshops, and community events. The school does an effective job at meeting the expectations of the community as well as its stakeholders and offers the school facilities for community events. A parent liaison is on the school's staff and coordinates a myriad of activities to help bridge school to home communication.

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

- Monthly articles appear in the local newspaper.
- Parents receive progress reports at 4.5 and 9 week intervals.
- The school's website and teacher web pages are updated daily.

- The school administration maintains an inviting open door policy which sets the tone for stakeholders to take an active part in the education of their children.
- The school has an active Parent Teacher Organization, employs a parent liaison, and offers parent workshops throughout the year.

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

- Establish strategies to increase volunteer opportunities for all stakeholders to become involved in all aspects of the school to include serving on the school Improvement team, being mentors for at-risk students, and assisting the media specialist.
- Explore the idea of implementing a Student Council to promote the input of students.

**Finding:** Seminole County Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

## Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

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

The school has clearly-defined expectations for student learning and teacher performance aligned with the school's vision. The administrative staff regularly reviews academic and personnel performance in an effort to keep the school in a continuous improvement mode. Methods used include classroom observation of teachers and students, quarterly reviews of student academic progress in each class, and an annual review of standardized test results. From these observations, the administration and staff determine strengths and weaknesses in the program and seek innovative ways to improve the curriculum, student achievement, and teaching effectiveness. Curriculum initiatives, professional development, and staff realignment are used to strengthen the school's improvement efforts. As a result of these efforts, the school has been named a Title 1 Distinguished school and has met State and Federal mandates for 9 consecutive years.

The school's profile comprehensively represents the school, its students, and the school community. The school relies upon data-based decision making to guide instructional practices and professional development. Strategic planning processes also require a commitment to continuous analysis of student performance data at all levels. The school system compiles and disseminates disaggregated data for use by school administrators and teachers. School administrators and teachers are encouraged to analyze data and use the results to differentiate instruction to meet individual learner needs. The team noted a need to expand professional learning in the area of data disaggregation and differentiation of instruction. Teachers, students, and parents review progress and set goals for improvement. The school uses a variety of processes to ensure that there is a continued focus on student achievement and to promote lifelong learners. Each of the school's goals for achievement and performance serves as a guiding principle for school improvement efforts. It is apparent that the present administration works closely with each teacher to guide the development of a comprehensive process of school improvement.

Common planning time for teachers has resulted in a stronger focus on increasing student achievement and has helped to close gaps between current and expected student performance levels as evidenced by the school's academic achievement of making AYP since inception of the federal mandate. Once school-level data are disaggregated and needs assessments conducted, specific school needs are identified and correlated professional learning is planned. All school-level professional learning allocations support improvement initiatives. Summative and formative data are used to determine if improvement goals are achieved at the school level. Through the analysis of multiple data sources, administrators and staff members are able to continually identify areas of strength and weakness. Strategic steps are taken to attempt to close achievement gaps among subgroups and to meet other identified goals. The team suggest that the school seek additional research-based instructional strategies to close the achievement gaps between the white and black subgroups as well as students with disabilities.

Parents are truly partners with school personnel in the education of their children. The school is committed to student achievement and performance as well as to developing a strong professional learning community. This is evident through allocations of funds for all stakeholders, materials, and professional development.

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

- Common planning time enables teachers to analyze assessment results on a continuous basis to make amendments to the school improvement plan, to design instruction, and to plan lesson units as needed.
- Parental involvement and support for high standards are evident.
- Academic success is consistent school-wide.
- Interventions based on best practices in education are aligned and systematically supported.
- The leadership fosters a culture of collaboration.
- Professional development opportunities are varied and directed to individual need.

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

- Implement additional research-based intervention and instructional strategies and best practices to meet the needs of all students and to improve CRCT scores among the subgroups.
- Intensify efforts to identify the factors contributing to the low performance scores of all students in science and social studies and to revise the goals and action plans regarding intervention in these academic areas.
- Intensify efforts to identify the factors contributing to the achievement gap of the black and white student population in mathematics, reading, science, and social studies.
- Expand professional learning opportunities for all teachers to acquire skills in data disaggregation and integrating technology into instruction.

**Finding:** Seminole County Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

## Conclusion

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

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

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

# Appendix

## Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Dr. Gary Dorough, Chair/Lead Evaluator
- Mrs. Elizabeth Knighton, Team Member (Randolph Clay High School)

## AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

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