Accreditation Progress Report

Contents

1.0 About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI .......................................................... 3
2.0 Introduction to the Accreditation Progress Report .................................................... 4
3.0. Summary .................................................................................................................... 5
4.0. Required Action 1 .................................................................................................... 8
   4.1. District/System Response ....................................................................................... 8
   4.2. Reviewer Response ............................................................................................... 10
1.0 About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

**Background.** Dedicated to advancing excellence in education worldwide, AdvancED provides accreditation, research, and professional services to 27,000 schools in 65 countries. AdvancED provides accreditation under the seals of 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).

**The Accreditation Process.**
To earn and maintain accreditation, district/systems must:

1. **Meet the AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems.**
   District/System demonstrate adherence to the seven AdvancED standards which describe the quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for school systems to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness.

2. **Engage in continuous improvement.**
   District/System implement continuous improvement focused on improving student performance and school effectiveness.

3. **Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review.**
   District/System engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, district/system host an external Quality Assurance Review team once every five years. The team evaluates the district/system's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the district/system's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and required actions to help the district/system improve. The district/system acts on the team's required actions and submits an Accreditation Progress Report at prescribed intervals following the Quality Assurance Review.

The AdvancED accreditation process engages the entire school community in a continuous process of self-evaluation and improvement. The overall aim is to help district/systems be the best they can be on behalf of the students they serve.
2.0 Introduction to the Accreditation Progress Report

Purpose
The Accreditation Progress Report (APR) is a critical component of the AdvancED accreditation process. It engages the district/system in a detailed review and analysis of the steps it has taken to address the required actions made by the AdvancED Quality Assurance Review (QAR) team. Completing the report helps the district/system focus and reflect on its continuous improvement efforts.

It is the responsibility of the district/system to address each of the QAR report's required actions within the 5-year term accreditation. Deadlines for completion of the report are based on the district/system's accreditation status and must be met to maintain accreditation. Some district/systems may complete multiple reports during the 5-year term to demonstrate that they have fully addressed the required actions.

Structure of the Report
The APR is organized around the required actions in the district/system's QAR team report. The APR lists the required action from the report along with the rationale and evidence supporting the required action. The district/system then indicates the progress that it has made toward meeting the required action and provides a more detailed response describing the actions it has taken and the results obtained. The district/system provides a response for each of the QAR team required actions.

Following the district/system's response is the reviewer's response. Each APR is read by an AdvancED reader in the state or regional office who reviews the district/system's response to determine if the required action has been met. The reader provides his/her assessment of the progress the school has made and then offers comments to the district/system. If required actions remain in progress or not addressed, a new APR will be created with a new deadline for completion. As noted earlier, the district/system must address the required actions within the 5-year accreditation term.

Conclusion
The Accreditation Progress Report is a useful report for members of the district/system and broader community. It helps community members see and monitor the ongoing improvement efforts of their district/system. It demonstrates how the district/system uses its accreditation for the ongoing benefit of the students it serves.
3.0. Summary

1.1. Based on the actions taken by your institution to address the required actions provided by the QAR team, what has been the impact on your institution's overall effectiveness?:

Our school system readily recognizes and appreciates the required action provided by the QAR team. Over the last several years, our school system has experienced a rapidly changing student demographic in regard to the number of students coming from impoverished homes. Since our QAR visit, we have initiated multiple strategies to better serve this population of students. Our system strategic plan incorporates an emphasis on differentiated instruction and assessment with particular attention toward subgroup performance analysis. We place a high priority on serving the needs of all subgroup populations including students coming from an economically disadvantaged home. Since our QAR visit, the following has occurred:

1. Professional Learning/Data Review
   - Representatives from each of our four schools attended a poverty simulation activity and redelivered what they learned to each of our faculties during the 2012-2013 school year.
   - During pre-planning of 2013-2014, every single employee of Bremen City Schools participated in a poverty simulation on site. Outside trainers assisted us with setting up stations where "families" moved through and had to make tough decisions regarding budget spending with very limited resources. Additionally, law enforcement officials and representatives from outside agencies participated as well.
   - During pre-planning of 2013-2014, four Bremen City Schools teachers, who went to school here and grew up in poverty, gave personal testimony of what they experienced and how they were able to work their way of poverty and become educators. This extremely powerful message from each of them reinforced to our staff that they do make a difference. A better understanding of what students from poverty experience was clearly expressed to our staff.
   - During the 2012-2013 school year and continuing this year, faculty is engaged in subgroup data analysis with specific emphasis on student achievement results of economically disadvantaged students. Student achievement results of this subgroup are correlated to specific domain analysis to see where student weaknesses lie relative to various standardized testing domains. School and system improvement plans are modified as varying student subgroup needs are identified.
   - During the 2012-2013 school year, our high school staff were taken by bus to our community's more impoverished neighborhoods. Staff were able to personally see the types of homes and poverty some of our students come from to create a better understanding of what the students face on a daily basis.

2. Resource Allocation
   - The system has employed a full-time intervention strategist. Although this position is there to work with all students, certainly children coming from poverty that have need of additional intervention strategies benefit from having this person in place. Specifically, this position works directly with teachers to provide extensive interventions where they are needed to assist our students.

3. Effectiveness/Results
Since the Spring 2012 QAR visit, our school system continues to score at extremely high student achievement levels on virtually every single measure in existence. Further, our graduation rate continues to be one of the highest in the state of GA. So, even though our student demographic has changed, we are still meeting the needs of our students including meeting the needs of our economically disadvantaged students. One of the most impressive examples of this achievement includes the CCRPI (College and Career Ready Performance Index) score for each of our schools. All four of our schools scored 90 or above on this measure. Very few school systems in the state of GA can boast of this achievement.

Further, we have one Title One school, which is Jones Elementary (grades Pre-K through 3rd). Jones Elementary is a “back to back” Georgia School of Excellence for 2011 and 2012 for highest performance. With an approximate 30% free/reduced student population, the fact that we can still achieve "highest performance" status reinforces that our subgroup population of economically disadvantaged is performing at high levels with the rest of the student population. Additionally, Jones Elementary is a Title One Distinguished Reward School as well.

4. Mentoring

- We are increasing our mentoring efforts, especially for students identified as coming from poverty. Some of our identified students do not come from two parent households, and we believe by providing mentors to our students, they will have someone they can confide in with issues they are facing. Mentors serve a variety of needs for our students but they specifically work with them on academic and behavioral issues.

1.2. What would you consider to be challenges that still lie ahead and how do you plan to address those challenges?:

Our achievement scores have not decreased even though our free/reduced population continued to increase. One of the biggest challenges is for all of us to not become complacent and just assume that will always continue. The urgency to continue to carefully analyze the subgroup performance of our E.D. students must remain despite our continued successes with this population of students.

Through personal testimony when our teachers who grew up in poverty spoke, our staff experienced strong emotions tied to our students coming poverty. We must always remember to keep our expectations high with a high dose of understanding. Teachers must guard against lowering expectations due to feeling sorry for our students coming from poverty. We must continually emphasize to expect the best from our students but also provide all necessary support structures the students need to be able to meet our expectations.

We are finding that our students who come from poverty often need additional support than students who don’t come from poverty. With such shrinking resources, it is becoming increasingly difficult to add support positions. But, we will need to continually maximize all funding sources and prioritize the needs of our economically disadvantaged students when difficult economic decisions have to be made.

1.3. How will you use the insights gained from your accreditation activities to inform and enhance your quality assurance and school improvement efforts?:

We will continue to make subgroup analysis of instruction and assessment part of our school-level and system-level improvement plans and efforts.

Improvement plans are frequently discussed, modified and updated to reflect changing data and identified needs.
We will keep the needs of our economically disadvantaged students at the forefront of our improvement efforts by continuing to incorporate professional learning activities which focus on the needs of these students.

Our participation in a new evaluation system in GA for both our teachers and administrators incorporates examination of student achievement results. Particular attention and emphasis on E.D. student achievement will be a part of evaluations. This, in turn, will require all of us to continually remain aware of the needs of our E.D. students.
Bremen City School System hosted a Quality Assurance Review team on 03/11/2012 - 03/14/2012. Through interviews with district/system stakeholders, classroom observations, and a review of district/system documents and student performance results, the team developed a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) report detailing its findings from the visit. The full report can be viewed at www.advanc-ed.org.

The QAR report contained commendations and required actions for the district/system. The district/system is responsible for addressing each of the required actions in the report. At prescribed intervals based on the district/system's accreditation status, the district/system must complete an Accreditation Progress Report. Below, please find the required actions from the QAR report and the district/system's response to each required action. Following the district/system's response is the reviewer's progress response and comments.

4.0. Required Action 1

Source: QAR
Date: 2012-03-25

Required Action:
Disaggregate and analyze data of specific student sub-groups (i.e. economically disadvantaged students) so that interventions and strategies can be incorporated into district and school improvement plans.

Evidence:
The district leadership indicated a change in the demographics of the students. Teachers indicated that students are monitored and provided remediation and support as needed. Specific interventions and strategies for student sub-groups were not delineated in the school improvement plans. It is important to identify specific interventions and strategies especially as those populations grow in number.

Rationale:
Identifying subgroup population issues and needs allows the district to plan for and address specific needs all students.

4.1. District/System Response

Progress Status: Completed
Response: 1. Professional Learning

- Representatives from each of our four schools attended a poverty simulation activity and redelivered what they learned to each of our faculties during the 2012-2013 school year.
- During pre-planning of 2013-2014, every single employee of Bremen City Schools participated in a poverty simulation on site. Outside trainers assisted us with setting up stations where "families" moved through and had to make tough decisions regarding budget spending with very limited resources. Additionally, law enforcement officials and representatives from outside agencies participated as well.
• During pre-planning of 2013-2014, four Bremen City Schools teachers, who went to school here and grew up in poverty, gave personal testimony of what they experienced and how they were able to work their way of poverty and become educators. This extremely powerful message from each of them reinforced to our staff that they do make a difference. A better understanding of what students from poverty experience was clearly expressed to our staff.

• During the 2012-2013 school year and continuing this year, faculty is engaged in subgroup data analysis with specific emphasis on student achievement results of economically disadvantaged students. Student achievement results of this subgroup are correlated to specific domain analysis to see where student weaknesses lie relative to various standardized testing domains. School and system improvement plans are modified as varying student subgroup needs are identified.

• During the 2012-2013 school year, our high school staff were taken by bus to our community's more impoverished neighborhoods. Staff were able to personally see the types of homes and poverty some of our students come from to create a better understanding of what the students face on a daily basis.

2. Resource Allocation

• The system has employed a full-time intervention strategist. Although this position is there to work with all students, certainly children coming from poverty that have need of additional intervention strategies benefit from having this person in place. Specifically, this position works directly with teachers to provide extensive interventions where they are needed to assist our students.

3. Effectiveness/Results

• Since the Spring 2012 QAR visit, our school system continues to score at extremely high student achievement levels on virtually every single measure in existence. Further, our graduation rate continues to be one of the highest in the state of GA. So, even though our student demographic has changed, we are still meeting the needs of our students including meeting the needs of our economically disadvantaged students. One of the most impressive examples of this achievement includes the CCRPI (College and Career Ready Performance Index) score for each of our schools. All four of our schools scored 90 or above on this measure. Very few school systems in the state of GA can boast of this achievement.

• Further, we have one Title One school, which is Jones Elementary (grades Pre-K through 3rd). Jones Elementary is a “back to back” Georgia School of Excellence for 2011 and 2012 for highest performance. With an approximate 30% free/reduced student population, the fact that we can still achieve "highest performance" status reinforces that our subgroup population of economically disadvantaged is performing at high levels with the rest of the student population. Additionally, Jones Elementary is a Title One Distinguished Reward School as
well.

4. Mentoring

- We are increasing our mentoring efforts, especially for students identified as coming from poverty. Some of our identified students do not come from two parent households, and we believe by providing mentors to our students, they will have someone they can confide in with issues they are facing. Mentors serve a variety of needs for our students but they specifically work with them on academic and behavioral issues.

We will continue to make subgroup analysis of instruction and assessment part of our school-level and system-level improvement plans and efforts.

Improvement plans are frequently discussed, modified and updated to reflect changing data and identified needs. We will keep the needs of our economically disadvantaged students at the forefront of our improvement efforts by continuing to incorporate professional learning activities which focus on the needs of these students.

Our participation in a new evaluation system in GA for both our teachers and administrators incorporates examination of student achievement results. Particular attention and emphasis on E.D. student achievement will be a part of evaluations. This, in turn, will require all of us to continually remain aware of the needs of our E.D. students.

4.2. Reviewer Response

Progress Response: Completed

Comments for Institution: AdvancED commends the district for the steps it has taken to address the Required Action of the Quality Assurance Review team. As outlined in the district’s response, the district has demonstrated that a range of strategies were developed and implemented to effectively mobilize its efforts in meeting the needs of economically disadvantaged students. AdvancED concurs that this Required Action has been completed and encourages the district to continue its work in this area.