

# Report of the Quality Assurance Review Team for

**Washtenaw Intermediate School  
District  
Dr. William Miller, Superintendent  
Ann Arbor, MI**



*AdvancED is the parent organization of the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and Improvement, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and Schools Improvement, and National Study of School Evaluation.*



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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, educational service agencies must:

### 1) Meet the AdvancED Standards for Quality Educational Service Agencies.

Educational service agencies demonstrate adherence to the seven **AdvancED** standards which describe the quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for Agencies to achieve quality learner performance and organizational effectiveness.

### 2) Engage in continuous improvement.

Educational service agencies implement a continuous improvement process that articulates the vision and purpose that the agency is pursuing (vision); maintains a rich and current description of learners, their performance, agency effectiveness, and the agency community (profile); employs goals and interventions to improve learner performance (plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (results).

### 3) Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review.

Educational service agencies engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, agencies host an external Quality Assurance Review Team once every five years. The Team evaluates the agency's adherence to the **AdvancED** quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the agency's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and recommendations to help the agency improve. The Team provides an oral exit report to the agency and a written report detailing the Team's recommendations. The agency acts on the Team's recommendations and submits a progress report two years following the review.

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



# Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

## Purpose

The purpose of the Quality Assurance Review is to:

1. Evaluate the educational service agency's adherence to the **AdvancED** quality standards.
2. Assess the efficacy of the agency's improvement process and methods for quality assurance.
3. Identify commendations and recommendations to improve the agency.
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 agency is operating with institutional integrity – that it is fulfilling its vision and mission for its learners and other constituents.

## Educational Service Agency Preparation

To prepare for the Quality Assurance Review, the educational service agency community engages in an in-depth self assessment of each of the seven **AdvancED** standards. The agency identifies and describes the evidence that demonstrates that it is meeting each standard. Through this internal review, the agency examines how its systems and processes contribute to learner performance and agency 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 agency. The Team reviews the findings of the agency's internal self-assessment, conducts interviews with representative groups of constituents, reviews learner performance data and other documentation provided by the agency, and observes practices and daily operations. The Team engages in professional deliberations to reach consensus on the agency'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 agency 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 **AdvancED**. The report contains commendations and recommendations for improvement.

## Using the Report – Acting on the Recommendations

The educational service agency uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The agency is held accountable for addressing the recommendations identified in the report. The NCA CASI State Office is available to assist agencies in addressing the recommendations. Two years following the Quality Assurance Review Team visit, the agency must submit a progress report detailing the actions and progress it has made on the Team's recommendations. The report is reviewed at the state and national level to ensure the agency is addressing the recommendations.



## Accreditation Recommendation

The Quality Assurance Review Team uses the findings from the onsite visit to make an accreditation recommendation that is reviewed by the national **AdvancED** Accreditation Commission. Accreditation is granted by the **AdvancED** Accreditation Commission and communicated to the agency following action from the commission.

## Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and Schools (NCA CASI), a division of **AdvancED**, visited the Washtenaw Intermediate School District (WISD) on October 21-24, 2007.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed

- The Superintendent of WISD
- Five members of the WISD Board of Education
- 46 WISD and local school district administrators
- 17 teachers
- 15 external constituents (community members and parents)

A total of 84 constituents were interviewed.

The Team also reviewed documents, learner performance data, and other artifacts provided by the agency. Specifically, the Team examined the agency's systems and processes in relation to the seven **AdvancED** standards:

- Vision and Purpose
- Governance and Leadership
- Teaching and Learning
- Documenting and Using Results
- Resource and Support Systems
- Constituent Communications and Relationships
- Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The **AdvancED** standards focus on systems within the agency and systematic methods of attaining high learner 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 agency, looking not only for adherence to individual standards, but also for how the agency functions as a whole and embodies the practices and characteristics of a quality educational service agency.

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



## Commendations

The Quality Assurance Review Team commends the WISD 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.

### Strengths

- Visionary WISD superintendent who is highly visible and involved in the community
- A committed leadership team
- An agency perceived to be an innovative facilitator and capacity-builder by local districts
- Board of Education that is stable, knowledgeable, and focused on supporting the quality of the WISD's plan of work and the satisfaction of its customers
- Community confidence and financial support evidenced by the renewal and increase of recent Special Education millage votes
- WISD facility and resources that are readily accessible to constituents
- Providing longitudinal exit and follow up (survey) data about graduates to each of the high schools in the county
- Advocacy for services to learners with special needs from birth through young adulthood

### Commendations

- WISD leadership:
  - Is highly trusted, respected and is seen as an innovative change agent
  - Makes extraordinary efforts to meet the needs of 10 diverse school districts through local delivery planning, and sharing of WISD resources
  - Creates cost-saving consolidated services and generate additional funding sources (e.g., grant writing) in the face of shrinking financial resources
  - Fosters strong collaborative relationships with key community constituent groups that have resulted in the development and delivery of cutting-edge joint improvement initiatives
- A WISD culture that:
  - Focuses on the “common work”, the “Big Ideas”, its 2010 Plan and proven implementation strategies (such as advisory committees, leadership design work teams), which hold great promise for improving performance and educational access for all learners
  - Implements effective ways for administrators and teachers to collaborate and solve problems
  - Provides meaningful professional development for local district staff
- Sound fiscal management
- Reputation for quality service as evidenced in receiving the Michigan Association of School Board's “Visionary Leadership Award” in 2007

### Challenges, which can present potential barriers to continuous improvement that WISD Faces

- Funding structures
- Capacity to continuously gather and analyze key data



- Clearly and consistently communicating to constituents the agency’s mission and vision
- Meaningfully assessing the effectiveness of WISD service delivery to drive increased efficiency
- Defining and communicating a quality process for selecting, implementing, and evaluating initiatives
- Formally obtaining feedback on WISD effectiveness and program impact from all constituent levels

## **Recommendations**

In addition to the commendations, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following recommendations for improvement. The Team focused its recommendations on those areas that, if addressed, will have the greatest impact on improving learner performance and overall agency effectiveness. The WISD will be held accountable for making progress on each of the recommendations noted in this section. Two years following this review, the agency will be asked to submit a progress report on these recommendations.

### **Recommendations**

- Create an assessment framework and implementation plan which uses learner performance data as a measure of agency effectiveness
- Gather and systematically use data to focus on internal continuous improvement efforts and provide support services to districts
- Engage in a comprehensive needs assessment which includes internal staff, local district and school staff, parents, and community members.
- Systematically use data in setting priority initiatives to achieve the goals that they have identified.
- Empower the constituents at all levels to participate and contribute to the WISD 2020 Plan.
- Communicate the current vision, mission and goals of the agency as identified in the 2010 Plan and ensure that the “Big Ideas” are carried out in a meaningful and effective manner.



## Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Educational Service Agencies

The Team reviewed the agency's adherence to each of the **AdvancED** standards. The findings from this review are provided in the section **Standards For Accreditation** of this report.

### Next Steps

The agency should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all constituents.
2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the commendations' section to maximize their impact on the agency.
3. Develop action plans to address the recommendations made by the Team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the recommendations.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the agency's efforts to improve learner performance and agency effectiveness.
5. Two years following the Quality Assurance Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the Team's recommendations. The report will be reviewed at the state and national level to ensure that significant progress is being made toward the recommendations. Lack of progress can result in a change in accreditation status.
6. Continue to meet the **AdvancED** accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

### Resources

**AdvancED** offers a range of resources to support your agency 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 agencies with their improvement efforts. Available any where, any time, the network can be queried for information on a variety of improvement subjects. The **AdvancED** Research and Development division provides research, handbooks, and tools to assist agencies 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 review and for action at the national level by the **AdvancED** Accreditation



Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the Agency. Upon receiving its accreditation, the agency should celebrate its achievement with the agency community. The NCA CASI accreditation seal is available through the NCA CASI website for agencies to post on their website and in agency communications. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and more can be ordered from the website to help you share your accomplishment with your community.

## Summary

The accreditation process engages the educational service agency in an ongoing journey of continuous improvement. The next steps in this journey are to build on the strengths and address the recommendations noted in this report. Doing so will enable the agency to advance in its quest for excellence and deepen the fulfillment of its mission for all learners and other constituents.

## Standards for Accreditation

The primary requirement for accreditation is that 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.

## Vision and Purpose

**STANDARD: The agency establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of learners and the effectiveness of the services being provided by the agency.**

WISD established its mission, “to promote continuous improvement of achievement for every student while providing the highest quality service to our customers”, during its first Conference on Teaching and Learning. Evolving from this mission during the ensuing years have been conversations among WISD staff and advisory groups such as the WISD Superintendent’s Association to more strategically define this mission. To that end by 2001 the agency had created its 1) purposes and guiding principles, 2) measurable Common/High Expectations for K-12 student learning, and 3) research-based ‘Big Ideas’. During the last seven years these core ideas have guided the WISD to restructure its work in providing service to the ten unique school districts it serves. These kinds of *vision/purpose* ideas have served as an umbrella to create common understandings and language, a focus for action, and consensus.

To advance its mission, WISD established in its 2010 Plan four goals or ‘Focus Areas’ (Community Collaboration, Educational Programs and Student Services, Technology and Business Services, and School Improvement Partnerships—Achievement Initiatives and School Improvement Practices). Each area has two to four action objectives.



WISD's profile (posted online) summarizes aggregate data from several sources for which the agency can gain access. These group data include student demographic and special education program information and results from the Michigan Educational Assessment Program. A foundation of the agency's profile is student perceptual data gathered from annual graduate exit surveys of member school districts. According to WISD, the profile's intent "...Is to provide information that constituents need...on how well county schools prepare for transition to adult life." While not directly linked to its profile and also posted online, another source of key data presented mostly in narrative format is WISD's annual services report.

Evidence gathered during interviews indicates that a broad array of constituents can articulate WISD's mission. They can generally link or connect that mission to the agency's 'Big Ideas' and Common/High expectations for student learning. Best understood and most often cited as examples of the mission-in-action are several initiatives currently being implemented. These include the adolescent literacy project, providing longitudinal exit and follow up (survey) data about graduates to each of the high schools in the county, and services to learners with special needs from birth through young adulthood.

Within the scope of establishing a shared purpose and direction during the last seven years is the culture that WISD has created. Integral to that culture is a common language of continuous improvement, which enhances dialogue and operational effectiveness among its many advisory committees. The common language helps focus on and align the work of agency design teams, as exemplified, for instance, by the coordination of literacy initiative activities and professional development activities across many school districts served by WISD.

Constituents perceive and value that WISD listens to their needs and ideas, and works diligently to establish a cohesive county system for learners within ten unique school districts. WISD is perceived to be an innovative facilitator and capacity-builder by local districts and external constituents.

Efforts to gauge the degree to which the agency's mission is driving its work can be strengthened by establishing a formal, systematic process as a check on current reality and shared understanding of the agency's mission (principles, common expectations, and 'Big Ideas') among key WISD constituents. Integral to this process could be conducting a comprehensive needs assessment, which should include internal staff, local district and school staff, parents, and community members. It is especially timely to gather such information, because the agency is commencing on its next planning cycle.

While challenging to continuously gather, analyze and make sense over time of key data, doing so is critical to the success of a continuously improving educational service agency. Quantitative and qualitative data should form an agency profile that robustly describes the quality of the work of the agency, in terms of program impact, as well as demographics of its constituent groups and various communities. Because this is an educational agency, learner performance data, while somewhat difficult to obtain, should be included as a measure of agency effectiveness. By strengthening the quality of its profile in these ways, WISD can be better informed about 1) the effectiveness of its current initiatives, 2) possible changes in learner needs and community wants, 3) future strategic goals and initiatives, and 4) ways to improve the delivery of services to its many customers.

## **Finding**

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall



assessment level of *Operational*, indicating that WISD *has met* the accreditation requirements for this standard.

## Governance and Leadership

**STANDARD: The agency provides governance and leadership that promote learner performance and agency effectiveness.**

The agency has leaders who have established processes to develop its vision and improvement efforts, and are advocates for these efforts. The Board of Education is comprised of five individuals elected to serve six-year terms, each has been or is currently a member of the local board from one of the 10 constituent public school districts. This visionary, knowledgeable, and supportive Board of Education has developed written policies that govern the operation of the agency, communicates regularly with the Superintendent either individually or collectively at regularly scheduled Board meetings, and strongly supports the work of the agency. The formulation and adoption of these written policies is the basic method by which the Board exercises its leadership in the operation of the agency. The study and evaluation of reports concerning the execution of its written policies is the basic method by which the Board exercises its control over the operation of the agency. Only those written statements adopted and recorded are regarded as official Board policy. Of note, the WISD's Board received the distinct honor of the Visionary Leadership Award for 2007 by the Michigan Association of School Boards' Association. It recognizes the Board's vision, leadership and success in raising student achievement.

In addition, the agency has a Board-approved organizational chart outlining finite functional areas that collectively and individually provide services to constituent districts and the manage agency's internal operations. Each functional area has leaders who recognize and preserve the executive, administrative, and leadership prerogatives of the Superintendent, and ensure compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations. The administrative team meets regularly with the Superintendent and with multiple work groups to review goals, accomplishments, and work to be accomplished and to align to the stated needs of its constituents. They are trusted and respected as innovators and change agents.

The Superintendent, Dr. William Miller, serves not only as a regional leader to the Washtenaw County schools but also as the President of the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Districts. Through his visionary and charismatic leadership, the agency is able to build public support, secure resources, and manage agency resources to serve constituent districts. His recognized and respected relationship and involvement with numerous community agencies has established the foundation whereby the leadership team can deliver services to constituent districts as established in the 2010 Plan, annual Board Goals, and the Conference of Teaching and Learning.

The work of the agency is guided by the Common/High Expectations framework that is reviewed annually by the Superintendents' Association. Work groups align the agency's resources and talent toward common outcomes. Most of the evaluative feedback received by the agency is informal in nature; however, it is valued and serves to effect change of direction or design of the work. A



continuous dialogue of collaboration is evident and encouraged by all leaders in the agency, and a shared responsibility is evident toward agency improvement to support the needs of its constituents and improve student achievement. The Conference on Teaching and Learning has shown results in the agency's on-going efforts to provide leadership opportunities and assist local districts in improving student achievement across the county. Existing countywide committee structures have been modified to accommodate the work of the Conference on Teaching and Learning and professional development as they focus on the achieving the Big Ideas.

The agency has a significant strength in modeling collaboration among and between its staff and the districts it serves. The community recognizes the leadership of the Board of Education and the leadership team in collaborative initiatives through the use of established frameworks toward student achievement. Through collaborative work groups such as the Effective Practices and Assessment Work Group and the Early College Alliance with Eastern Michigan University, the agency is noted as a facilitative and situational leader, and one that influences the collective thinking of the county education populace toward its primary focus of student achievement. WISD creates and supports collaborative networks of constituents to support agency programs and provides internal and external constituents meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership as evidenced by "the work continues" even though key leadership staff relocated in recent times. Through the evidence collected the team praises the agency for the stability and focus it has brought and for its ability to align resources, which have brought local initiatives into place.

The agency has established a culture of continuous improvement through leadership practices that promote collaboration and leveraging of resources. While intermediate school districts cannot mandate local districts to participate or engage in initiatives, like WISD, they can only influence and hopefully convince constituents that there is value in collective action as compared to individual autonomy. Although this agency has been successful in fostering the sense of collaboration, it is incumbent upon its leadership to reiterate the guiding principles with all staff on a regular basis, so an understanding of direction can be readily verbalized, acknowledged, and aligned. Because resources are scarce leveraging the use of the available technology fiber infrastructure to foster communication and increased collaboration is encouraged. The team recognizes Dr. Miller's visionary leadership and encourages him to develop and secure resources to provide a more systematic analysis and review of student and agency effectiveness.

### **Finding**

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of *Highly Functional* indicating WISD *has met* the accreditation requirements for this standard.



## Teaching and Learning

**STANDARD: The agency provides and supports research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all learners.**

WISD is directly involved with member school districts in a number of separate, yet systemically aligned, initiatives to support the improvement of teaching and learning. In general, each of these initiatives is a response to a data-driven need by some or all of the member districts related to student learning and improved instructional capacity. Evidence within initiative blueprints and plans indicate an alignment of programs to the Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations, High School Course Expectations, and the High School Graduation Expectations. Data from associated assessments are used to establish baseline and post-intervention evaluation. As the Quality Assurance Review Team reviewed the Math Initiative with middle and high schools, the Adolescent Literacy/Reading Apprenticeship, the Instructional Consultation Teams, the Early College Alliance, it appears that all integrate research-based practices featuring differentiated instructional strategies and a focus on reaching all learners. With many of the member districts of the agency using an inclusion model for special education services, this attention to all learners is magnified.

It was observed and documented that each initiative has an extensive, multi-phased plan for professional development (capacity building), leadership training, implementation monitoring, and assessment. It is recommended that each current and future initiative use a process of aggregating individual district data into reporting progress and overall impact of programs/initiatives. Although the agency does not staff consultants in specific curriculum areas, each staff member does have a union-managed fund intended to support professional improvement aligned to the efforts they are working on.

Another intent of this Teaching and Learning standard is to assure that the agency promotes and supports student access to resources required to maximize learning. The agency sponsors a Material Resources Center (Regional 16 Educational Materials Center REMC), is one of 22 such Centers, and is physically down-sizing and being replaced with digitally-delivered media services to all schools. This is possible because of the installation of a fiber network and the regional contracting with information services like unitesstreaming (digital video distribution), Grolier Multimedia, Encyclopedia Americana, and other digital products. It is recommended that the agency expand the promotion of and new application strategies for the instructional applications and technology integrations.

This agency reflects an extremely high degree of trust and integrity between its capacity to serve, understand, and meet the needs of the ten school districts. This is foundational to its work. Although a clearly documented process for selecting specific initiatives was not evident, it was abundantly clear that each initiative selected for implementation was done using a trusted consensus process with the Superintendents' Council. In addition, each was effectively designed through the multitude of Work Groups designed for research, planning, implementation, and evaluation. The leadership of the agency's superintendent, Dr. William Miller, demonstrates a high level of leadership capacity and sincere passion for improving student learning through collaborative



improvement efforts. This extends into community, state, and national level involvements and leadership. These networks create multiple opportunities for leveraging expertise and resources for the improvement of teaching and learning. It is evident that there exists a culture of learner-centricity within the agency. The Conference on Teaching and Learning serves as a focusing role in this mission.

The term “partnership” captures the horizontal relationship of work with member districts in areas related to teaching and learning. Initiatives are not “pushed down” upon the districts, but rather “pulled from” the expertise and needs of the districts through collaborative planning processes. It is evident that these planning /work groups do an effective job of bringing the right people together to most effectively design and implement the projects within the unique framework of each district. However, sometimes the agency’s process is considered a bit too thorough, causing implementation to be delayed for some districts, which are more ready to “get on with it”.

It is also evident that the professional staff is extremely talented and committed to serving member districts. School district personnel spoke highly to both their capacity to serve and their professional/personal integrity.

It is recommended that the agency examine its process for planning, implementing, and evaluating initiatives. At the outset of planning initiatives there should be clearly identified needs/goals to be met, metrics used to identify and measure baseline data, formative data used to monitor the project implementation, and summative data reflecting changes in the baseline data. While it is difficult to secure district performance data, an aggregate trend line reflecting these various aspects of the initiative are encouraged. Schools using **PowerSchool** will have expanded opportunities for performance data management.

The agency is encouraged to examine its role in serving the needs of vocational and career education learners in its service area. While there is no specified millage to support such efforts and the last vote was held 22 years ago, and the Early College Alliance focuses on the need to provide Allied Health field. Constituent feedback indicates great interest in generating greater opportunities in vocational and career education.

### **Finding**

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of *Operational* indicating WISD *has met* the accreditation requirements for this standard.

## **Documenting and Using Results**

**STANDARD: The agency enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve the agency’s effectiveness.**



Standard 4 promotes the use of a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly defined performance measures that yield valid and reliable results. There is clear evidence that WISD is in the process of creating a systematic assessment system that will provide them with the timely and relevant data they need to measure student performance and organizational effectiveness. WISC has created a model protocol for evaluating school/district initiatives, which will provide the framework for evaluating new initiatives adopted by the agency. They are also in the process of creating an assessment framework, which will guide their efforts at both internal and external evaluations. As these more labor intensive models of assessment and evaluation are undertaken, the resource needs of WISC must be examined.

WISD has engaged in a number of external evaluations of their initiatives, specifically the special education programs under their jurisdiction. The excellent collaborative relationships between WISD and many community organizations, including two major institutions of higher learning within their boundaries, provide a rich resource. The use of university partners by WISD to support their evaluation efforts is laudable and an excellent way to provide reliable, valid, and bias free summative data.

There is a systematic evaluation process in place for the evaluation of staff development services provided by WISD. The evaluation of the Mathematics-Science Partnership projects, completed in collaboration with the University of Michigan-Dearborn is strong evidence of efforts to collect longitudinal data to evaluate their services. Additionally, perception data collected directly after staff development services provide WISD staff with feedback upon which to revise, update, and determine the appropriateness of services being provided to their constituents. The professional development model, which is based on a full range of service options, should be evaluated using measures of teacher classroom behaviors, content and skill acquisition, in addition to student achievement.

The WISD profile provides a variety of data to its constituents. The use of achievement data, demographic data, cohort study data, and exit/follow-up data in one document provides a good overview of the county. The charts and graphs are well-displayed and appropriate. To improve the profile's usefulness, longitudinal data are needed to provide baseline data for use in evaluating new initiatives. In an ISD where districts are concerned about comparisons between each other, strategies for using county-wide data to promote school and district improvement need further exploration.

The use of student achievement data in evaluating improvement initiatives was evidenced in the evaluation of the adolescent literacy program supported by WISD. This prototype evaluation used comparison groups and a standardized reading test (Degrees of Reading Power) to measure change in student achievement. Current plans are being developed to measure the impact of a new mathematics initiative on student achievement as well as monitor the implementation and impact on staff. Because the use of the prototype evaluation model used for the adolescent literacy initiative shows great promise, it is recommended that WISD continue its use to determine best practices that can be promoted throughout their service region. The use of multiple sources of data, including the MEAP, should be considered in evaluating results of initiatives on student achievement.



Building staff capacity in using data effectively was demonstrated through several initiatives. Schools in the smaller districts felt that they could ask staff at WISD to provide them with disaggregated data or to work with them as they reviewed their data. The Equity Initiative was viewed positively by staff with its emphasis on “real” data and analyzing disaggregated data to identify issues of equity. This type of a focused initiative, which provides staff with opportunities to engage in a purposeful analysis of data, appears to be a good strategy to help schools use data to select, monitor, and evaluate their work with students.

The eight Common/High Expectations or Countywide Student Performance Goals developed by WISD in collaboration with Washtenaw county superintendents provides a broad and diverse set of expectations for students in Washtenaw County. Additionally, WISD has endorsed five research-based strategies that should be employed in achieving these expectations. There is little evidence of an assessment framework that would provide both formative and summative data about student success and the effectiveness of the agency in utilizing these strategies. It is recommended that by creating an assessment framework and implementation plan, which measures student success and agency effectiveness, WISD will create systematic data that can be used to focus their own internal continuous improvement efforts and support to districts.

WISD provides a diverse set of services and initiatives to support the districts and schools that they serve. Feedback on the effectiveness of ISD services and initiatives is collected predominantly through informal channels (e.g. meetings, focus groups, interviews). It is recommended that by engaging in a comprehensive needs assessment, which includes internal staff, district staff, school staff, parents, and community members, WISD will create systematic data for use in setting priority initiatives to achieve the goals that they have identified.

### **Finding**

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review team has assigned the overall assessment level of *Operational* indicating WISD *has met* the accreditation requirements for this standard.

## **Resource and Support Systems**

**STANDARD: The agency has the resources necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure the delivery of services and programs that support learning for all students.**

The agency meets the intent of the Resource and Support Systems standard by following state guidelines regarding the submission of a technology plan and implementing the actions identified in the plan. WISD follows legal requirements in completing a annual audit of agency finances that confirm the agency’s use of government accounting standards. The audit shows that the district has been fiscally responsible in allocating resources to implement programs and services. In addition, WISD provides staff that meet the qualifications required by law and provide facilities that are safe and clean and accommodate the needs of staff and students.



Agency strengths in this Standard area include:

- Collaboration with other entities, such as the United Way, that combines resources to form a comprehensive community approach to support early childhood (*Success by 6*). Another example of this is the establishment of “high tech” classrooms that incorporate the study of lasers as a result of collaborating with a local Chamber of Commerce.
- Implementation of an appraisal process for WISD teaching assistants that is built on best practice.
- Annual conversations with local district technology leaders giving them an opportunity to provide feedback on services currently offered and future services needed.
- Public trust that the agency is fiscally responsible as demonstrated in the passage of the mileage.
- Business services’ assistance to local districts in providing staff (Willow Run) and technical assistance with job postings and recruiting.
- Contracting to provide interpreters for children and families who need assistance with language translation and establishing Equity Teams to begin addressing the needs of diverse populations of students.
- Consolidated services such as substitute calling and fingerprinting, and sharing curriculum staff.

The agency could improve its efforts in several ways. One example is to revise employee appraisal systems/instruments for all job families, using as a viable model that which has been developed for Teaching Assistants. During this revision, agency-specific mission, vision, expectations, and job-specific skills and abilities should be included as items on the instrument where appropriate. Evidence gathered during interviews with several of the agency leaders indicated this as an arena needing attention.

Another example needed attention as evidenced during interviews with both agency staff and constituent district staff is planning for leadership succession. WISD can consider offering leadership professional development opportunities for central office positions as well as superintendent positions. Similarly, providing professional growth opportunities for all staff needs examination and planning. The only evidence provided was a discussion about seven clerical staff beginning the central office certification process offered by MIEM. While this resulted in the agency becoming a central site for offering the training associated with the certification, the staff brought this idea forward themselves. A needs assessment may be helpful to determine where agency staff need to grow in relation to the mission, vision, expectations, WISD services provided, delivery methods utilized, and the means of assessing those services. Professional growth may also result from a strong mentoring program for new administrators.

### **Finding**

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review team has assigned the overall assessment level of *Operational*, indicating WISD *has met* the accreditation requirements for this standard.

## **Constituent Communications and Relationships**

**STANDARD: The agency fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its constituents.**

The WISD superintendent, administrators and staff participate on numerous community, non-profit, governmental committees and boards. They facilitate and coordinate the dialogue among and between various levels of constituent personnel and are responsive to expectations and stakeholder



satisfaction. Stakeholders appreciate the opportunities to meet and dialogue with WISD and other district staff to share ideas and strategies to improve student learning. Such practices provide strong evidence that WISD is responsive to Community Expectations and needs for constituent satisfaction:

One of the key avenues of communication and delivery of information to constituents is the WISD website. It provides an array of reports, links to resources, and institutional information. The website is well designed and easy to navigate. In a digital world, this form of “real time” communication is essential. WISD is fortunate to have someone who coordinates media communications and works with the webmaster to post important and timely information to constituents. The website is a communications cost savings to the district in lieu of the printing and mailing expenses incurred previously.

As described within the Board policy and defined as “Keys to Successful School, Family, and Community Partnerships”, parental involvement clearly occurs. The “National African American Parent Involvement Day activities, and the resources of Project PERFORM as supported by the Alliance for Families (link on the WISD website) is another tool to assist parents in the education of their children. Parents who were interviewed are extremely supportive of WISD and its services to students with disabilities.

The agency has the understanding, commitment, and the support of constituents. Agency personnel seek opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership among constituents as demonstrated by the participation of constituents in the Equity Team, the Instructional Design Team, and Reading Apprentice Cadre of Teachers.

Several agency strengths and successes emerged during the Team visit. The agency fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support learning as evidenced by the Leadership and Design Team, the instructional consultation team (University of Maryland model), and the Equity Team. These groups were interviewed and spoke positively of their work with WISD and the difference it has made in student learning.

The five “Big Ideas” of this agency have built a strong framework for constituent districts to enhance their efforts in concert with WISD to improve student learning. These five Big Ideas ensure “personalized learning for every student,” “effective instructional practices”, “multiple assessments”, “teaching and learning teams” to provide “just in time” interventions for students, and “early childhood and family support” so children come to school ready to learn.

The agency solicits the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance their work. They communicate their goals and expectations for service in support of student learning in their WISD Plan 2010. This 2010 Plan is a powerful communication tool that can evolve as it listens to and communicates with an expanded group of stakeholders.

The website provides information that is meaningful and useful to stakeholders and is effective for constituents in a digital world. Other initiatives that are supported by the agency such as the PAC, the parent resources of Project PERFORM, and African American Parent Involvement Day, the



Equity Team professional development and dialogue assists in examining practices and biases that impact teaching and learning.

To enhance its communications with constituents it is suggested that the use of the WISD website as a communication tool be expanded with direct emails to parents, community partners, and constituent districts when upcoming events and new resources are posted.

Use the website as a key data collection tool, for instance, to determine the usage by tracking the daily, monthly hits. Such a practice can help determine the extent of use of the website as a communication resource.

To validate work of and communication with constituents, Gather pre and post quantitative and qualitative data during the teaching and learning team meetings. This may assist in determining if there is a positive impact on best practices and student success.

To communicate the goals and expectations for service in support of student learning for a deeper and more meaningful understanding with stakeholders, bring this plan to other levels of administration and teacher groups and solicit the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance the work of the agency.

### **Finding**

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review team has assigned the overall assessment level of *Highly Functional*, indicating WISD *has met* the accreditation requirements for this standard.

## **Commitment to Continuous Improvement**

**STANDARD: The agency establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that positively impacts the services and programs in support of student learning.**

The process for continuous improvement in the WISD is based on the WISD 2010 Plan that forms the basis of a strategic plan and was developed with representation from each of the 10 local districts. The plan consists of four focus areas and 14 specific objectives. Within the framework of the 2010 Plan are Guiding Principles and mission statement that align with “Common and High Expectations –K-12” for all students in the service area.

The strategic plan guides the work of the agency and includes strategies that include: support for early childhood and families; professional teams of educators from across the service area working together as Teaching/Learning teams; creating a system of Multiple Assessments that would be useful to local districts; and the development of personalized learning strategies for all students.

The 2010 Plan effectively outlines the priorities of the agency and creates an accountability system for their employees. The plan also guides the delivery of technical assistance for staff as they work



with local districts in the areas of school improvement, curriculum development, professional development, and the delivery of special education services.

The continuous improvement process calls for evaluation of services at the point of delivery. The plan is reviewed and updated by seeking feedback from the Washtenaw Superintendent's Association, the Conference on Teaching and Learning, a review of state and federal obligations and the identified needs of local schools, students and parents.

The framework for the 2010 Plan demonstrates a clear focus on improving learning for all students in the service area. While the delivery of special education services commands the use of substantial resources for special needs children, it is evident that the agency uses its continuous improvement process to refine and deliver its services; its process facilitates clear and consistent messages that convey the vision and mission of the agency. The collaborative culture throughout the service area serves to meet not only the needs of students, but also the organizational needs of local districts. There are formal means of gathering feedback from constituents, such as surveys and focus groups and interaction with the staff members of local districts. The evidence gathered by the Team demonstrates that the WISD is an organization that listens respectfully to their customers. Simultaneously, WISD is leading a change process focused on building the capacity of all schools and districts in the service area a continuous improvement process of their own that aligns with the vision of the entire service area.

To further strengthen the ISD's internal capacity and process building skills, it is recommended that WISD develop continuous improvement plans at the departmental level that align with the agency's 2010 Plan and its future assessment framework.

### **Finding**

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review team has assigned the overall assessment level of *Operational* indicating WISD *has met* the accreditation requirements for this standard.

## **Conclusion**

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

The team identified several recommendations for improvement that the agency will need to address. Two years following this review, the agency will be required to submit a progress report summarizing its progress toward addressing the team's recommendations.

The Quality Assurance Review Team expresses appreciation to Dr. William Miller, members of the professional staff, especially Deborah Clancy and Pam Mish, and community representatives for hosting the AdvancED Quality Assurance Review Team. The Team wishes the agency and its constituents much success in the quest for excellence through NCA CASI accreditation with **AdvancED**.



# Appendix

## Quality Assurance Review Team Members

**Dr. Lucy Hayden** (Team Co-Chair), Associate Executive Director, SACS CASI (retired); **AdvancED** Field Consultant, Newnan, Georgia

**Patrick Geary** (Team Co-Chair), Educational Consultant for Educational Service Unit #3; principal consultant for The FGR Group, Omaha, Nebraska

**Dr. Marilyn Kulieke**, Senior Vice President, **AdvancED**/National Study of School Evaluation, Schaumburg, Illinois

**Donna Rehbeck**, Director of Human Resources, Ingham Intermediate School District, Mason, Michigan

**Beverly Knox-Pipes**, Assistant Superintendent for Technology and Media Services, Genesee Intermediate School District, Flint, Michigan

**Betty Burke-Coduti**, Associate Superintendent, Marquette-Alger Regional Educational Service Agency, Marquette, Michigan

**Dr. Mike Bugenski**, Director, Michigan **AdvancED**/NCA CASI, Lansing, Michigan



## **AdvancED Standards for Quality Educational Service Agencies**

The **AdvancED** Standards for Quality Educational Service Agencies are comprehensive statements of quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for Agencies to achieve quality learner performance and organizational effectiveness. As Agencies reach higher levels of implementation of the standards, they will have a greater capacity to support ever-increasing learner 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 Educational Service Agency establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the Educational Service Agency.

### **Governance and Leadership**

The Educational Service Agency provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and Educational Service Agency effectiveness.

### **Teaching and Learning**

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

### **Documenting and Using Results**

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

### **Resource and Support Systems**

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

### **Constituent Communications and Relationships**

The Educational Service Agency fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its constituents.

### **Commitment to Continuous Improvement**

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



**Quality Assurance Review Certification – ESA**  
(For use with Quality Assurance Reviews for District Accreditation)



Educational Service Agency: Washtenaw ISD      Date(s) of Visit: Oct. 21-24, 2007

**I. Evidence of Meeting Standards**

Standard	Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
<b>Standard 1:</b> Vision and Purpose			<b>X</b>	
<b>Standard 2:</b> Governance and Leadership				<b>X</b>
<b>Standard 3:</b> Teaching and Learning			<b>X</b>	
<b>Standard 4:</b> Documenting and Using Results			<b>X</b>	
<b>Standard 5:</b> Resources and Support Systems			<b>X</b>	
<b>Standard 6:</b> Constituent Communications and Relationships				<b>X</b>
<b>Standard 7:</b> Commitment to Continuous Improvement			<b>X</b>	

Notes:

In the professional judgment of the quality assurance review team, if a standard is rated “not evident” or “emerging” there should be a recommendation(s) related to the standard in the narrative of the report.

**II. Demonstration of Continuous Improvement**

Use the following rubric to identify the agency’s level of effectiveness in engaging and demonstrating a continuous process of improvement.

Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There is little or no evidence of a continuous process of improvement.</li> <li>○ There is limited awareness among staff of the process of continuous improvement and its importance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The improvement process is episodic (sometimes but not consistently evident).</li> <li>○ There is growing awareness among most staff of the improvement process and its importance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The improvement process is almost always evident.</li> <li>○ There is general awareness among staff of the improvement process and its importance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The improvement process is consistently evident or routine, aligned with other practices, and focused on achieving the vision and expectations for student learning.</li> <li>○ Almost all staff is aware of the improvement process and understands its importance and how it impacts other people and practices in the agency.</li> </ul>

**LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS:** (Check the appropriate box.)

NOT EVIDENT     EMERGING     OPERATIONAL     HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL



### III. Providing Quality Assurance

Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There is little or no evidence of methods or procedures designed to monitor and support the teaching and learning process and service delivery.</li> <li>○ There is limited awareness among staff of current levels of effectiveness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Methods for quality assurance are episodic (sometimes but not consistently evident).</li> <li>○ There is growing awareness among staff that methods of quality assurance are being implemented to support, assist, and monitor the teaching and learning process and service delivery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Methods for quality assurance are almost always evident.</li> <li>○ There is general awareness among staff that methods of quality assurance are in place to support, assist, and monitor the teaching and learning process and service delivery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Methods for quality assurance are consistently evident or routine, aligned with other practices, and focused on achieving the vision and expectations for student learning and service delivery.</li> <li>○ Almost all staff is aware of the methods for quality assurance and understands its importance and how it impacts other people and practices in the agency.</li> </ul>

**LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS:** (Check the appropriate box.)

NOT EVIDENT   
 EMERGING   
 OPERATIONAL   
 HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL

### IV. Recommendation to NCA CASI for Educational Service Agency Accreditation:

Recommend initial accreditation

Do not recommend accreditation at this time

(Note: chair should provide below or on an attached sheet the conditions that must be met including standard deficiencies for initial accreditation.)

### V. Quality Assurance Review Team

**Chair: Dr. Lucy Hayden (GA)**

**Chair: Patrick Geary (NE)**

**Member: Dr. Michael Bugenski (MI)**

**Member: Dr. Marilyn Kulieke (IL)**

**Member: Donna Rehbeck (MI)**

**Member: Beverly Knox-Pipes (MI)**

**Member: Betty Burke-Coduti (MI)**

### VI. Special Comments or Notations by the Chairs: None

