

Report of the  
Quality Assurance Review Team  
for  
Shaker Heights High School

Michael Griffith, Principal

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Review Dates: 02/12/2009 - 02/13/2009



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

# Quality Assurance Review Report

## Contents

About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI .....	3
Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review .....	4
Summary of Findings .....	5
Commendations .....	5
Recommendations .....	9
Next Steps .....	10
Standards for Accreditation .....	12
Standard 1. Vision and Purpose .....	12
Standard 2. Governance and Leadership .....	13
Standard 3. Teaching and Learning .....	14
Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results .....	15
Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems .....	16
Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships .....	17
Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement .....	18
Conclusion .....	20
Appendix .....	21
Quality Assurance Review Team Members .....	21
AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools .....	21

## About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

**Background.** Founded in 1895, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) accredit public and private schools and districts in 30 states, the Navajo Nation, Latin America, and the Department of Defense Schools worldwide.

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

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

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

- 1) Meet the AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools.** Schools demonstrate adherence to the seven AdvancED standards which describe the quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for schools to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness.
- 2) Engage in continuous improvement.** Schools implement a continuous improvement process that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing (vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community (profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (results).
- 3) Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review.** Schools engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, schools host an external Quality Assurance Review Team once every five years. The team evaluates the school's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and recommendations to help the school improve. The team provides an oral exit report to the school and a written report detailing the team's recommendations. The school acts on the team's recommendations and submits a progress report following the review.

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

# Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Using the Report - Acting on the Recommendations.** The school uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The school is held accountable for addressing the recommendations identified in the report. The NCA CASI/SACS CASI State Office is available to assist schools in addressing the recommendations. Following the Quality Assurance Review Team visit, the school must submit a progress report detailing the actions and progress the school has made on the team's recommendations. The report is reviewed at the state and national level to ensure the school is addressing the recommendations.

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

## Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), a division of AdvancED, visited the Shaker Heights High School in Shaker Heights, Ohio on 02/12/2009 - 02/13/2009.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed the Principal, 5 members of the administrative team, 48 students, 15 parents, and 48 teachers. In addition, 16 support staff and 9 internal team members were interviewed. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the school. Specifically, the team examined the school's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

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

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

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

### Commendations

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

- **Academic assistance is provided to all students as needed in every classroom and through a variety of other sources.**

The school through its staff attempts to provide academic assistance in a variety of forms varying from the individual classroom teacher, special programs to after school tutoring. Classroom observations by members of the visiting team confirmed the role of classroom teachers in providing assistance. Students interviewed in the focus group reported daily support from teachers in the classes and also through special programs and after school tutoring. They reported that the faculty constantly challenges them to achieve, but also teachers who are very willing to offer assistance. Small class sizes were observed that enabled teachers to provide individualized instruction. Staff Development Training in differentiated instruction is one of the major school improvement efforts.

Special Education students are provided services from a team of professionals who individualize each student's program through the IEP Process designed to offer the best possible instruction. Special Education assistance is provided through Inclusion, Instructional Intervention Classes, Response to Intervention, and Small Group Tutoring.

Every student is viewed as important to the staff and community of Shaker Heights High School. Staff members are encouraged to make every effort to assist students having any difficulty learning. Teachers are committed to the goals of the school and the district.

- **There exists a strong sense of community commitment to continue the excellence of Shaker Heights High School. Students are encouraged to give to others and contribute to the benefit of one's community.**

The school offers a rich and diverse program with courses to meet every need and interest. The Shaker community has provided its students with superior schools, outstanding staff, and full resources to help every student take seriously an obligation to return benefit to the community. Many clubs within the school are service oriented including: Interact Club, Minority Achievement, SGORR, Youth Ending Hunger, Take Action, and the Environmental Club. Hours of community service are noted on student transcripts to recognize volunteerism.

The slogan for the Shaker Heights City Schools is "A community is known by the schools it keeps." The community of Shaker Heights has taken this slogan to heart when it long ago established its high school as a "lighthouse" school and supported it financially through a history of levy passages. Such a school and such a tradition can be maintained only through resources and support.

Community support for a school is critical to its success and supports the level of programming, staffing, and resources through local funding. Involvement in the educational programming offers the school the opportunity to meet community needs and offer its students the best possible education.

- **The school meets and excels the standard of Teaching and Learning and provides all students with a variety of levels for learning.**

Students have the opportunity to select courses from College Preparatory, College Prep Honors, Advanced Placement (AP), Career Preparation, and General Education. The Guidance Department with full support from the administration remains connected with the students and prepares them for their next stage with meetings and opportunities to meet post high school goals and opportunities. Special programs such as MAC Scholars and Mac Sisters encourage minority students to increase their academic potential. Many classes are team taught and teachers provide regular help throughout the day and after school. A strong faculty is available, focused and willing to help students at any level. Instructional expenditures are providing a platform for students to receive the most up-to-date information.

The commendation is important because it recognizes a school and district that is willing and has been willing to spend money, provide an ever-growing number of courses, and employ quality teachers with deep experience in education.

- **The community of Shaker Heights strongly supports its schools and provides excellent participation in the programs of the school, the parental groups and the Shaker Schools Foundation.**

There are many exemplars of Shaker parents offering support for the schools including:

- Shaker has parent support groups that are exceptional. The music boosters, PTO, and planning groups are singled out at the risk of not mentioning other worthwhile support groups.
- The Shaker Schools Foundation sponsors an annual 'Red and White' fundraiser that contributes major funding to school projects.
- Shaker has developed a parent resource room which attempts to allow a smooth transition for parents and children moving into the Shaker school community.
- The Shaker community has supported its schools financially through the passage of school levies even during periods when other systems are most generally failing such issues.

Strong community and parental support for the schools is critical to all aspects of the learning environment which enables the leadership, staff and students to realize their maximum potential.

- **Shaker Heights High School presents a tremendous learning environment provided by an exceptionally talented faculty and staff and administration aided by a variety of strong parental support groups.**

Shaker has traditionally, even in a changing community, accomplished achievement in a wide range of academic and cultural areas. Its National Merit Award winners, faculty who are AP readers and who are accomplished in areas outside the school environment, and the efforts of the Shaker Foundation are just three of the many examples available to support this statement.

Despite a changing community, difficult economic times, and a high number of area private schools, Shaker has incredibly more than maintained its high level of academic excellence. Parent groups are very supportive, but the major resources of Shaker are its instructors and staff. The community should do all in its power to identify positive reinforcement to maintain morale and to continue to attract quality instructors to Shaker.

- **Shaker Heights High School is steadfast in its efforts for continuous school improvement. They have implemented a collaborative process for improvement. Each department and the staff are committed to providing a high quality education for each individual student. Each student is seen as unique and therefore must have a differentiated plan for achieving success. This school meets and exceeds all requirements for accreditation.**

This is evident in the responses of the staff, the students, and the data that they have compiled. Each aspect of the improvement plan is clearly articulated in terms of each individual student achieving academic success. (This is also reflected in the student climate survey conducted in 2008.)

This focus on continuous school improvement has helped Shaker Heights High School to see each student as unique and that each student's achievement is important.

- **Shaker Heights High School is commended for its utilization of on-line resources to promote and facilitate communication between the school and its stakeholders.**

Shaker Heights High School has a comprehensive web page with important information and data that is easily accessible. The implementation of ProgressBook and DASL (the district data system) promotes the collaboration of parents and staff members by making data available. In addition, the use of e-mail for communication between school and families is important to the commendation. Finally, promoting the "Oval" as a communication tool is valuable to this strand.

The utilization of these tools allows for parents and stakeholders to be informed and have accessibility to data,

updates, and key personnel. In addition, the use of electronic resources is a cost savings to the district, allowing for dollars typically allotted for mailings to be spent elsewhere.

- **The school has a unique way of using test data and results to focus instruction. The system that monitors student performance and how it is used is based on the individual. Student results are used to improve individual student achievement.**

The school uses a number of programs to focus instruction including:

- Use of the DASL program has targeted student academic strengths and weakness.
- The Naviance program also shows students how they “measure up” to other students during the application stages to college and allows access to post-secondary results of student performance.
- Using the Response to Intervention (RTI) Program is meeting the needs of struggling students and special needs students.

Students feel empowered that they are treated as individuals.

- **The entire staff studies together. The professional approach and attitude of the staff is commendable and is a direct result of strong, supportive leadership and a commitment to students and achievement.**

A supportive superintendent and board office staff enhance leadership and governance in the building. High School staff reports that the District provides the resources and support necessary to take well thought out risks and to offer programs designed to meet the needs of all students. Recently, the staff focus is on differentiated instruction. The staff has also studied Stiggins’ Assessment for Learning Model and Ruby Payne’s Diversity Model.

As a result of the collaborative environment, curriculum programs and student programs are continually changed, enhanced, and created to meet the needs of all students.

- **The school does an exceptional job of providing opportunities for all teachers to engage in leadership opportunities. The school administration makes it a priority to find the resources necessary to assist teachers in their efforts to help students learn.**

During the interview process, teachers indicated that their input and ideas are listened to and supported.

The opportunities teachers have to participate in the leadership and governance of the school include the High School Steering Committee, Department Chair Meetings, Individual Department Meetings, the High School Advisory Team.

The opportunities for students and parents to participate in the leadership and governance of the school include Student Council, PTO, Coffee with the Principal, special topic programs.

The shared leadership model used in the school enhances teaching and learning for all students and staff as evidenced by previously noted programs, courses, and projects that have been established to improve student achievement.

- **The school has a living vision statement that is reflected in the work of all staff members and integrated into the**

daily operations. Shaker Heights High School is a "Learning community with excellence for All."

Visual observations of student work and examples of student excellence are posted throughout the school building. Discussions with staff members and students supported the observations. The Continuous Improvement Plan clearly reflects the school's mission and addresses the Ohio Academic Content Standards so that every student can succeed.

This focus on vision has enabled the school to maintain strong academic expectations and address the needs of a changing community.

## Recommendations

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

- **Increase the amount of information provided to students about the programs available to help them succeed. This should include those programs that are for struggling students as well as those for the highly achieving students.**

During the student focus groups, it was brought to the visiting team's attention that students needed more information that was provided about help that is available to them in the school.

This school excels in working with the students who really want help. However, an increase in this information should be accessible to everyone.

- **Research the number of families with Internet access to determine what percentage of families are missing important communications based upon their inability to access on-line resources or e-mails.**

Evidence presented in group meetings recognizes the wide diversity, including socio-economic diversity, present in Shaker Heights. With this diversity, and with the downturn of the economy, it is questioned if all families have access to on-line resources.

The need to communicate and collaborate with all stakeholders is important to Shaker Heights' commitment to providing a quality education to all students. Overlooking a group, especially one that may be economically disadvantaged, may create a divide in a school that has worked hard to embrace its diversity.

- **Identify programs and counseling for non-college bound students.**

Shaker now is really two schools – one school with students in an outstanding Advanced Placement program and one school with students with academic needs. The parent focus group and the support personnel focus group both cited a need for more programs for the non-college bound students.

It is important to give encouragement and incentive to study for non-college bound students who will be facing a challenging job market requiring skills gained with only a high school education.

- **Identify ways to give positive reinforcement to a quality staff and faculty.**

The Shaker pay scale once far outdistanced other systems in the area, but it has become more in-line with other area schools. Other positive and attractive re-enforcements are needed to recognize and maintain staff while continuing to attract new members to the community.

It is important to encourage quality teachers to join the Shaker community which is a nationally recognized campus.

- **Develop and implement a system that reviews student achievement beyond high school to measure the success of students.**

There is currently no system in place to measure this data.

The school can make better use of its data for improving instruction and how it translates into student success beyond high school.

- **Establish a recognition program to honor the work of the support staff in the building.**

Support staff noted that they know they are valued, but direct recognition does not occur in the regular course of events. The support staff noted that programs for teachers and students exist, but there is not a formal program recognizing support personnel.

Honoring and validating all employees will further enhance the sense of spirit and tradition that exists at Shaker Heights High School.

- **Investigate and implement venues for informing and supporting students and families new to the district of the mission statement.**

Shaker Heights High School is experiencing a significant number of student mobility issues that brings students that are not familiar with the district traditions and vision into the school. In addition, a number of charter schools in the area have closed, and these students are joining the district.

The unfamiliarity of the mission statement has resulted in extra time being spent by staff and administration to inform and instruct new students during the course of the regular classroom instructional periods.

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

## Next Steps

The school should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all stakeholders.
2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the commendations section to maximize their impact on the school.
3. Develop action plans to address the recommendations made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the recommendations.

4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the school's efforts to improve student performance and school effectiveness.
5. Following the Quality Assurance Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the team's recommendations. The report will be reviewed at the state and national level to ensure that significant progress is being made toward the recommendations. Lack of progress can result in a change in accreditation status.
6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

### Resources

AdvancED offers a range of resources to support your school as it acts on the findings in this report. The AdvancED Resource Network, available at [www.advanc-ed.org/resourcenetwork](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 NCA CASI 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 recommendations noted in this report. Doing so will enable the school to advance in its quest for excellence and deepen the fulfillment of its mission for all students.

## Standards for Accreditation

The primary requirement for accreditation is that the Shaker Heights High 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:**

Shaker Heights High School has a mission to develop “A Learning Community with Excellence for All.” This is posted over the entrance to the building and is an integral part of the school’s vision statement. The vision was developed by the High School Steering Committee and was reviewed and reinstated within the last three years. Many displays of student work and examples of student excellence are evident throughout the building. Exemplars are used rather than the words of vision and mission.

The school has clearly defined expectations for student learning that serve as the focus of student assessment and performance. The vision guides allocations of time and fiscal and human resources. Evidence of the school’s using the vision to guide the teaching and learning process includes the use of DASL, constantly updating the school profile, principal’s newsletters, the annual leadership retreat and the monthly department chair meetings.

Hiring practices include high consideration to the acceptance of the mission and a personal commitment to develop a learning community. An annual review of the building goals, national testing scores, course offerings and end of course assessments leads to revisions based on the outcomes.

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

The school has a proud tradition of offering excellence to all and using its mission to drive all decisions. Collaborative groups organized throughout the building focus on the vision to meet the needs of all students. A long-range technology plan is in place with the goal of bringing access to each classroom supported by professional development and technology integration. There is evidence of aligning the curriculum with instructional practices throughout the building. Teachers give students regular feedback to sharpen their knowledge and skills. Multiple forms of communication through the Internet, the school website, newsletters and staff meetings are utilized to keep all stakeholders involved and informed.

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

Investigate and implement venues for informing and supporting students and families new to the district of the mission of the school. Student mobility affects a significant portion of the population and provides an opportunity to welcome new members and offer them the communication tools necessary to success.

**Finding:** Shaker Heights High 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:**

Leadership and governance at Shaker Heights High School is shared among all staff. The administrative team is cohesive and works effectively together. The administrative team has clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The team works together to lead improvement efforts and initiatives. Roles and responsibilities are disbursed based on the individual strengths of the team members and all team members are offered opportunities to grow. Teachers share in leadership responsibilities through a variety of teams, committees, and individual opportunities. Shared leadership opportunities include Department Chair Meetings, the High School Steering Committee, Department Meetings, the High School Advisory Committee, and individual Department Meetings. Teacher input is valued and encouraged. Teacher input has resulted in a number of programs that have proven beneficial to students. Examples of programs that have resulted from teacher input include the formation of the Tutoring Center, programs for differentiated instruction, the Fast Track Program, and the Response to Intervention program.

The formation of building policies and procedures are established by the administration with input from staff, parents, and students. There is appropriate documentation outlining all policies and procedures. The principal seeks input from parents through the PTO and the monthly "Coffee with the Principal" program. Student input is gathered through the Student Council. In addition, students report an open door policy with the administration. As an example, students interviewed perspective candidates for the job of senior class advisor and were able to select the best candidate.

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

The school does an exceptional job of providing opportunities for all teachers to engage in leadership opportunities. During the interview process, teachers indicated that their input and ideas are listened to and supported. The school administration makes it a priority to find the resources necessary to assist teachers in their efforts to help students learn.

The entire staff studies together. Recently, the staff focus is on differentiated instruction. The staff has also studied Stiggins' Assessment for Learning Model and Ruby Payne's Diversity Model. The professional approach and attitude of the staff is commendable and is a direct result of strong, supportive leadership and a commitment to students and achievement.

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

All staff feels valued and is proud of the work they do. Support staff indicated that they know that the school leadership knows they do good work, but identified that they do not always receive the attention/praise that they feel needed and/or deserved. It is recommended that the school leadership establish a structure for recognizing and rewarding support staff and integrating such a program into the culture of the school. Such

recognition could take formal and informal forms. An employee of the month program is one formal suggestion. Informal suggestions include making it a point of telling support staff that the work they do is appreciated and done well.

**Finding:** Shaker Heights High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

### Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

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

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

The teachers and the students are dedicated to developing effective learning skills and practices. The atmosphere of the school gives all students an opportunity to perform at the highest level possible. The effective use of guidance personnel helps students select their best options while they are encouraged to strive for higher levels of achievement. The faculty is alert to the needs of all students and is adaptive to the concerns with a variety of teaching methods. The teachers feel supported by the administration in the methods and choices that are used in the classroom. They also feel comfortable discussing student issues and talking effectively with both students and parents. Faculty meetings are devoted to instructional issues with one topic the focus of each month.

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

Teachers and administrative staff are supportive of the freedom allowed students to be responsible for their choices. Students like the availability of teachers after school and during class. Students like the methods that teachers use to engage the students. Video, simulations, and discussions are some of the more popular teaching methods that help build student confidence in dealing with adults in and out of school. Students expressed a comfort with the teaching staff that enabled the students to criticize the teachers and the school without losing respect for the school. Teachers stated that they felt that the administration goes out of its way to help them with concerns and to find open lines of communication with parents. The school's resources are plentiful, and textbooks are updated at a planned rate. The staff supports the establishment of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program that will meet a need for advanced students.

A positive learning environment is supported by the teachers. A wide variety of teaching options is a definite strength. Teachers liked the interest in learning that students bring to the classroom. The bond between the teachers and the vast majority of students is such a strong and positive force that it drives the school toward continued excellence in the academic areas.

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

The Response to Intervention (RTI) Program is a good beginning in heading off poor performance by students and should be further developed to increase the number of students that are involved.

The Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) results need to be improved, and the staff should support designing new programs to address the struggling students. Formative data should be used to redirect student learning.

Up-to-date classroom video equipment is available in the science area but needs to be extended to other departments as funds permit.

**Finding:** Shaker Heights High 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 has a unique way of using test data and results to focus instruction. The system that monitors student performance and how it is used is based on the individual. Student results are used to improve individual student achievement. For example, no class rank or G.P.A. is given to the student body. This only occurs when an individual meets with their guidance counselor. The open enrollment to the curriculum removes the need for data to determine or track students to specific courses. The school does use OGT results to target students for academic assistance in activities such as the tutoring center and the MAC Brothers and Sisters programs. Interviews with students indicated that because test scores and data are not stressed they feel that they are not "a number," but rather they are an "individual." The interview also revealed the dislike of posting such data and believed this data was best served with strictly the individual. Interviews with parents revealed that they are informed about student progress and the overall school performance as a whole. Test scores have long been a source of pride for the school and the community.

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

Students are treated like individuals rather than a number based on test scores. Many students score high on AP, ACT, SAT test. Use of the DASL program has targeted student academic strengths and weakness. The Naviance program also shows students how they "measure up" to other students during the application stages to college. Using the Naviance program has allowed students and parents access to post-secondary options. Student data is used in relationship to the MAC Brothers and Sisters. There is an overall attitude that test scores are not what is important, rather it is the individual who is and not a test score.

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

Develop and implement a system that reviews student achievement beyond high school to measure success. Post-secondary and graduate surveys and programs such as the college readiness program of the American College Testing Program (ACT) may help meet this recommendation.

**Finding:** Shaker Heights High 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 slogan for the Shaker Heights City Schools is “a community is known by the schools it keeps.” The community of Shaker Heights has taken this slogan to heart when it long ago established its high school as a “lighthouse” school and supported it financially through a history of levy passages. Such a school and such a tradition can be maintained only through resources and support. Despite the value of all of the above, the school’s biggest resource is its faculty and staff. Albert Einstein stated that “It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.” The staff at Shaker Heights High has a great blend of young and old – dedicated to the “relentless pursuit of excellence.” The mission statement of the high school (“A learning community with excellence for All”) speaks to this goal. The number of National Merit Scholars, commendations by national publications, the types of colleges in which graduates are enrolled, and the number of faculty AP readers (currently 7) speak as much to the quality of the staff as well as to the talent of the students. However, this experienced, caring faculty and staff should never be taken for granted.

Shaker Heights High School competes for incoming students with many excellent private schools. Also, the changing socio-economic make-up of some incoming students has forced Shaker to focus on the concerns of lower level students in addition to the needs of the traditionally high level of students normally associated with Shaker. Despite these challenges, and the added accountability of a nationally recognized campus, the Shaker staff performs at a consistently high level of excellence.

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

Shaker has an excellent, experienced, caring staff. Shaker hires teachers who are true professionals. Shaker is not afraid to hire experienced instructors rather than strictly limiting their hires to first year teachers. Shaker has parent support groups that are exceptional. The music boosters, PTO, and Shaker Foundation are singled out at the risk of not mentioning other worthwhile support groups. Shaker has developed a parent resource room which attempts to allow a smooth transition for parents and children moving into the Shaker school community. The Shaker community has supported its schools financially through the passage of school levies even during periods when other systems are most generally failing such issues.

The guidance department is very solid. One parent said that she could now very easily put all the counselors’ names in a hat and be entirely satisfied with whomever is picked out as counselor for their child. Shaker attempts to help struggling students and special needs students with after-school tutoring programs, the MAC program, mentoring, the response to intervention program, full inclusion, and handicapped programs.

The school is very clean and has a great and caring custodial staff. Many wonderful remodeling projects such as the large auditorium, the new two-level cafeteria, the new gymnasium, and the refurbishing of the student washrooms have taken place. The security has been upgraded in keeping with the times with lockdown codes and camera surveillance with a trained security staff. Security presents a safe environment for the student body.

The visiting team found the Shaker student body to be respectful and pleasant. The campus seemed to have a college-like atmosphere to which students seemed well adapted and which parents feel prepares them for their

world experiences after graduation. Shaker presents opportunities for world travel and culture and an introduction to a wide range and appreciation of the arts. The administration is very approachable, and students feel comfortable coming to them with their needs and concerns. The showcases which identify staff in a particular department help establish a department identity and are an aid to parents. The faculty and students are used to visitors, and they were not disturbed by the team visit. What the team saw was a genuine teaching and learning environment and not a special performance.

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

The internal team of the high school urged the team to offer suggestions for improvement as they are not satisfied with the status-quo and are constantly striving to improve.

- Find ways to positively reward the school's quality faculty and staff. Identify ways in which teachers can be recognized and appreciated.
- Shaker should participate in every opportunity for the naming of Jennings Scholars. They have a staff of Jennings Scholars; however, the system has not taken near the opportunity of this recognition opportunity.
- Small day to day teacher requests should be considered and met as quickly as possible (eg. darker curtains on second floor windows).
- Possible PA recognition of a teacher of the day and then a drawing from the daily winners for a teacher of the month who could be given a special meal from a selected area restaurant.
- Faculty parking area should be more strictly enforced.
- A PTO parent group may be able to come up with more creative ideas involving rewards from area merchants.
- There is a concern for students entering the school from closed charter schools or schools outside the district or state. Create a pre-evaluative period during which time a new student is evaluated as to which curriculum best meshes with the student's current academic level.
- Plan more programs for non-college bound students. This was a concern recited in parent and support personnel groups.
- Provide an option for the Oval Internet magazine to be mailed to homes that do not have computer capability.

**Finding:** Shaker Heights High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" 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 the preponderance of evidence, Shaker Heights High School is engaging and involving its stakeholders and community members. One piece of evidence supporting this is the parent room. This room serves as a meeting place and resource for current parents as well as parents who are new to the district. The material presented in this room is intended to ease the transition into the high school. In addition, the building's use of DASL and ProgressBook allows parents and staff members to monitor students' grades and behavior trends. Further, the building utilizes its web page as a communication tool with valuable information

regarding performance and achievement being displayed through this resource. Another resource utilized to communicate important information to community members is the "Oval," a weekly PTO newsletter electronically distributed. These tools are conducive to collaboration between educators and parents wishing to monitor and promote student achievement. Parents interviewed convey teachers and administrators are approachable, helpful and willing to work together. Shaker Heights High School benefits from strong relationships with booster groups who are committed to providing opportunities to educators and students alike. Communication with staff members is managed through monthly staff meetings and steering committee meetings. However, this structure does not appear to exist for support staff. Support staff articulated strong communications between others within this classification. Overall, Shaker Heights High School promotes communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

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

The school's use of on-line and electronic resources to communicate information to stakeholders is to be commended. These tools allow for accessibility, to those with Internet access, to valuable information while protecting valuable dollars typically spent on mailings. In addition, the accessibility of administrators and teachers to each other and parents through open door policies and e-mail is to be commended. The school's support of PTO communications and the creation of a parent room are valuable resources responding to community members' desires to be informed and placed at ease as they transition to the high school are examples of additional strengths in this strand. Finally, staff members view themselves as part of the "Shaker family." The reference to family is further support to the building's commitment to meeting the needs and communicating with its stakeholders.

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

Research the number of families with Internet access to determine what percentage of families are missing important communications based upon their inability to access on-line resources or e-mails. If the percentage is significant, investigate methods to increase correspondence with these families.

Arrange for opportunities to meet with support staff to recognize both their accomplishments and concerns. Allow them a venue to voice their thoughts and become recognized as part of the educational team.

**Finding:** Shaker Heights High 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:**

Shaker Heights High School has a commitment to collaboration and ongoing school improvement that aligns most functions of the school with the expectations for student learning on a local, state and national level. Improvement efforts are systemic, sustained, and fully embedded within the school's operation. This school demonstrates significant progress in improving individual student achievement by the implementation of

several programs designed to work with the individual student holistically. Improvement efforts are developed and discussed for change by every level of the adult population. Diagnostic information from a multiplicity of sources is used to help the various departments to develop curriculum to serve the students. Currently, one of the major school improvement efforts is training staff members for differentiated instruction.

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

Professional Development is continuous at Shaker Heights High School. Teachers are committed to the goals of the school and the district. Each student is seen as an individual, and academic achievement is primary in all that is done.

Staff and students alike discuss how wonderful it is to be in a school where diversity and multiculturalism is the order of each day. Both groups share a great deal about the appreciation of the different races, religions, cultures, and gender differences. They also discuss how diversity does not end there but is also within the classes themselves. In any given class, you may find from one end of the spectrum to the other, students with special needs up to and including Advance Placement students. Shaker Heights High School has this diversification in its program implementation because students are able to choose their courses rather than be placed.

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

The students were proud to say that the competition between students is eliminated because there is no class rank. Students are challenged to do their best in each subject area. It is evident that Shaker Heights High School demonstrates that its school improvement efforts are sustained and the school demonstrates progress in school effectiveness as well as improving individual student academic performance.

**Finding:** Shaker Heights High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

## Conclusion

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

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

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

# Appendix

## Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Mr. Paul Kostansek, Chair (Ashland University)
- Mr. Charles Spinner, Team Member
- Mr. David Miller, Team Member (Eastlake-North High School)
- Mr. Jason Martin, Team Member (Bay High School)
- Mr. Joseph Spiccia, Team Member (Mentor High School)
- Dr. Mary Rice, Team Member
- Mr. Theodore Wiehe, Team Member

## 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.