

**Report of the
Quality Assurance Review Team
for
Leyden Comm HS District 212**

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

Quality Assurance Review Report

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About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

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

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

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

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

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

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

Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the NCA CASI Illinois State Office (NCA-CASI-IL), a division of AdvancED, visited Leyden Comm HS District 212 on 05/02/2010 - 05/05/2010.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 21 administrators, 31 teachers, 30 support staff, 25 parents and business partners, 35 students, and 5 Board of Education members for a total of 147 stakeholders. In addition to meeting with district personnel and stakeholders, the team visited 2 schools within the school district. During the school visits, team members interviewed school stakeholders, observed classrooms, and reviewed relevant school artifacts. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the district. Specifically, the team examined the district's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

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

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

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

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

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

Commendations

The Quality Assurance Review Team commends the Leyden Comm HS District 212 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.

- **Resources and support systems in place are the embodiment of the district philosophy and provides a variety of opportunities for students to participate in a comprehensive learning experience.**

There is an extensive comprehensive curriculum where students are provided with a variety of options for multi-level core content academics, fine arts, and career technical programs.

All students are afforded an opportunity to explore individual strengths and interests when there are a variety of programs and opportunities to select and experience at the high school level.

- **The vision and mission of the district is the guiding force which is integrated into all practices and policies of the district.**

Stakeholders are connected and value their contributions in the development of the district vision and mission. This has motivated on-going support and connectivity to district decision making at all levels and an increased focus on initiatives.

The vision and mission provides a common voice for the district school community. There is a strong sense of solidarity in the district based on the understanding of the vision and mission statements.

- **The district leadership has established various formal structures to foster collaboration among stakeholders.**

There are a variety of district teams and committees that include all members and levels of the organization. The advisory and improvement teams provide significant feedback and participation in the decision making process and development of the district community.

Stakeholders at all levels of the district actively participate and invest in the collaborative process and provide meaningful contributions to the district.

Required Actions

In addition to the commendations, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following required actions for improvement. The team focused its required actions on those areas that, if addressed, will have the greatest impact on improving student performance and overall effectiveness of the school district. The Leyden Comm HS District 212 will be held accountable for making progress on each of the required actions noted in this section. Following this review, the school district will be asked to submit a progress report on these required actions. The district should refer to the detail provided in the standard reports for guidance and greater depth on the required actions.

- **Develop and implement a systematic articulation structure with the partner schools in order to facilitate that vertical alignment occurs with college and career readiness standards.**

The district profile indicates a trend that students entering Leyden high schools (from 11 partner school), are demonstrating lower readiness skills for success with the high school core curriculum. The district has provided transition programs for these students, however due to the increasing low levels of entrance skills these interventions must begin prior to entering a summer program for the ninth grade, in order to bring students up to proficiency for high school readiness.

There is a growing trend of students entering the district at a lower level of preparation for the high school curriculum at Leyden. Although the district has provided interventions for students entering the school; this would be more effective if vertical alignment began earlier during the middle school grade levels, and there was increased involvement from the partner schools.

- **Revise the utilization of data to monitor and evaluate initiatives to determine the impact on individual student achievement including analysis of strategies to close the achievement gap.**

The achievement gap has not had any significant or incremental change over the past 10 years; although there has been a notable change in demographics and entry level skill levels of students. The support programs and initiatives that are in place for students address the lowest performance levels.

Further analysis of data, and monitoring current initiatives will inform decision making related to individualized student growth and closing the achievement gap.

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

Next Steps

The school district should:

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

Resources

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

with continuous improvement.

Celebrating Accreditation

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

Summary

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

Standards for Accreditation

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

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

Standard 1. Vision & Purpose

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

Description:

The vision and mission at Leyden High School District 212 is a motivating force for all school community stakeholders. It is an integrate part of the tapestry that represents all elements in the district. The strong influence and impact of the vision and mission was evident through the numerous interviews that were conducted by the Quality Assurance Review (QAR) team members, print and electronic communications, and visibility of the powerful image that represented the vision. The mission was also clearly articulated and apparent throughout the district high school buildings. Both the vision and mission were explicitly expressed in a variety of communication modes including both printed and electronic announcements and messages provided to staff, students, parents and community members.

The superintendent introduced the initial idea of the vision for the district through an opening address to the staff in 2007. This address included the story of the 'extra degree' that reaches the boiling point... At 211 degrees water is hot, however 212 degrees reaches the boiling point, boiling water becomes steam...and with steam... You can power a train! S.L. Parker (2005). This image and idea caught on, and propelled school community stakeholders to participate in establishing a collective vision statement and mission that reflected reaching for the best, and giving a little extra to support student success. The result of stakeholder participation in these meetings, focus groups, and discussions was the creation of a new vision established the following year, it boiled down to a simple yet powerful statement articulated as "committed to excellence". The mission statement was then developed to support the values and cultural context. This statement currently guides the actions of the district community in order to accomplish the vision. "Accept personal responsibility that includes a community of lifelong learners, who prepare for global change and respect diversity and pursue a sense of fulfillment."

Multiple interview data indicated that the superintendent was approachable and accessible to administrative staff; and visible to students and community members. The superintendent's office is located in one of the high school buildings and this provided noticeable visibility and accessibility to the

community. Moreover, the stakeholders described the superintendent and district level leadership as good listeners who provided feedback on issues and concerns that came from the school community. Stakeholders believe that their voices are heard by the administration of the district.

Students and staff were provided an opportunity to dedicate themselves to the vision and mission of the district by signing a wall that was a promise to be “committed to excellence.” There was also a written reflection and agreement that the school principals received from students. This “Agreement to Commit” presented the students with a chance to articulate their understanding of the vision and mission of the district and school, and then personalize what this means to the students individual lives. During interviews both students and staff recalled their commitment to going the ‘extra degree’, for Leyden ‘212’.

Throughout the QAR team visit it was apparent that a strong sense of pride in this organization exists at all levels. Each group and individuals that the QAR team spoke with clearly articulated a connection to the vision, and felt a sense of partnership with the district. The stakeholders clearly communicated a clear understanding and direct relationship to participating in the process for developing a shared vision. This collaborative shared effort was led by central office, facilitated by school leadership, with major contributions by staff, community members, and parents.

Team members reviewed artifacts that demonstrated a variety of data sources that provided a detailed profile that explicitly depicted the schools, community, and students at Leyden High School District 212. There is an awareness that the demographics of the student population has changed dramatically with a significant increase in cultural diversity with Eastern European and Hispanic families and changing levels of socio-economic status (SES). These changes will continue to affect the district at different levels. The profile also indicates that students entering Leyden high schools are arriving with less academic skills, particularly in literacy levels.

The District Improvement Plan (DIP) provides a framework that identifies goals aligned with the vision of the district. There is an incredible amount of data compiled by the district that reflects student achievement data in the Strategic Plan and DIP. The district profile is used during parent and community meetings, and documented in the Superintendent and Principals’ newsletters. The main strategies used to support goals for the 2009-2010 school year focused on improving literacy across grade levels and subject areas. This is in alignment with student entrance data regarding reading scores and the vision of the district.

The Superintendent spoke of the vision and mission with enthusiasm and passion. T-shirts with the vision symbol were presented to students and staff, and are proudly worn during spirit days. A photo with the entire staff on their shirts is proudly displayed in the schools.

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

- The district’s vision and mission resonates for the school community and there are strong connections and support from stakeholders.
- District level leadership decision making is aligned with the vision and mission. This provides a model for school building level practices.
- The district vision and mission was a collaborative process and creation that emerged from the symbolic reference of going the extra degree of 212 degrees to make things happen at Leyden High School District 212.
- All stakeholders have bought in to the vision and understand what it means to “be the extra degree that makes a difference.”

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

- Revisit and connect stakeholders on a continuing basis with the vision and mission of the district.
- Monitor district profile trends and provide interventions as needed to address the gap and proficiency levels.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional," indicating that the Leyden Comm HS District 212 has met the accreditation requirements for the "Vision & Purpose" standard.

Standard 2. Governance & Leadership

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

Description:

The district is governed by a seven-member Board of Education with officials elected to four-year terms with the option for re-election. The district is under the leadership of a board-appointed Superintendent who is assisted by an Assistant Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, Chief Financial Officer, Director of Special Education, Director of Technology and Athletic Director. Interviews conducted with district staff, parents, community members, and students revealed that stakeholders respect, trust, and support both the Superintendent and Board of Education. All stakeholder groups indicated that both the Superintendent and Board of Education focus on “what’s best for students.” This statement is posted in the Board meeting room.

The Board is comprised of representation from each of the geographic communities represented in the district except for one, Rosemont. The Rosemont community area is mainly a business and commercial area in the district perimeters. Board members have diverse backgrounds and expertise. They work diligently to represent a united front. During the past ten years, all board decision votes, except for two, have been unanimous. The district has demonstrated a continued commitment to transparency in processes and procedures. This practice has engaged stakeholder groups, parents and the community at large in addressing policy issues confronted by the Board.

The Superintendent and board collaboratively work to garner public confidence and community resources to advance the district vision, mission, and goals. This is evidenced by their ability to obtain and maintain 93% of their system funding through local sources. This is exceptional considering most school systems are dependent on state and federal entities. The district provides each school with exceptional resources including highly qualified staff, exemplary facilities, comprehensive programming for students, updated teaching tools and supplies, and technology expansions to meet the needs of a diverse and changing student population.

The leadership of Leyden provides direction and support to all stakeholders toward the achievement of the district's vision and mission. Policies, instructional practices, curriculum decisions, and daily operating procedures are examined, revised and implemented through the lens of the district's vision and mission. These decisions are reviewed regularly by all governing bodies including the following: the Board of Education, the Superintendent, and multiple district and school wide committees. The governing structures of the district clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of each component of the district's

governance through the dissemination of the organizational chart and through frequent written and oral communication with stakeholders.

The district ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations. District staff is knowledgeable about curriculum standards and demonstrate knowledge and responsibility related to compliance. Artifacts provided clear documentation of adherence to ethical business practices and documentation of State and Federal Compliances and Assurances, including NCLB, Title I, EEO and Title IX. Furthermore, stakeholders affirm compliance with ethical business practices and are involved in the establishment and monitoring of adherence to all regulations.

The Superintendent and school leadership promote a culture of participation, responsibility and ownership by maintaining clear channels of communication for faculty, staff, parents and students. Employee salary schedules, a clearly outlined system of evaluation for all employees, provisions for leaves and sabbaticals, and commitment to professional development opportunities all give evidence to a system of governance that fosters a learning community throughout the system. Stakeholders report that the governance of the district leads to effective and efficient student outcomes that remain with them into adulthood. Additionally, this evidence supports recurring positive comments regarding the leadership of both schools and strong support from the district office for the work of teachers and administrators at each school.

Statements by board members and the Superintendent reveal they are informed about student performance data on a regular basis. The district engages in quarterly review of student performance data as part of most district wide committee meetings. Schools and practitioners are beginning to use the Mastery Manager, ACT, PSAE, and final exam data to drive instruction and create SMART goals. Interviews with administrative and teacher groups indicate that further growth is needed in the area of data analysis and using data to make prudent instructional decisions related to monitoring initiatives and classroom strategies to support student learning.

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

- The district's leadership actively and consciously incorporates the mission and vision of the district into all meetings, gatherings and events.
- All stakeholders report that district and school leadership at all levels encourage all voices to be heard throughout the decision-making process.
- There is collaboration across all levels of the district: Board of Education, Superintendent and staff, school administrators, department chairpersons, faculty, support staff, parents, students, and community members.
- The community exhibits deep respect, trust, and support of the Board and district/school leadership.

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

- Develop and implement a district wide formal system to collect, analyze, and utilize data to drive daily instructional practices, especially for average and high achieving students. Maintaining the current programming for low achieving students, while targeting these two groups will increase performance data.
- Address student outcomes to the teacher evaluation system at both non-tenured and tenured levels.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Leyden Comm HS District 212 has met the accreditation requirements for the "Governance & Leadership" standard.

Standard 3. Teaching & Learning

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

Description:

The district promotes teaching and learning through the establishment of a clear vision and mission that is understood and carried out by all stakeholders. The expectations for students are clearly communicated to both students and parents through student handbooks, course planning guides, and a well-developed internet website. The information provided to stakeholders related to curriculum, instruction, and student assessment is detailed and robust. The district website is an additional mode of communication that offers detailed documentation related to the curriculum.

District artifacts indicate that there is an extensive master schedule and a variety of course offerings for students that provide a broad experience during the four year programs for the high schools at Leyden 212. This was also evident during the instructional tours and classroom observations. The educational student experiences include comprehensive curricular and career-technical opportunities. The district provides multiple levels of course offerings for each core subject area, numerous fine arts programs, as well as elective courses including the following: 20 Art courses, 15 Business courses, 16 Family and Consumer Sciences courses, 20 Industrial Technology courses, 15 Foreign Language courses, eight Music courses and eight Physical Education courses. The course offerings far exceed the state minimum requirements; and further demonstrate the excellence to which Leyden is committed.

The district administrative team has supported the development of a strong culture of teaching and learning at both high schools. This is evidenced by the commitment to the following professional development initiatives: In-Service Wednesday, Summer Curriculum Projects, and Institute Days. During these professional development opportunities, teachers collaborate with one another to develop pacing guides and vertical alignment plans. Teachers from both locations cited the value in planning meetings and discussed how this has led to improved practice and increased student results in the classroom. Teachers are expected to collaborate in order to create departmental plans of action that incorporate components of the district's Literacy Initiative.

The Literacy Initiative has developed goals around the area of literacy. During the evolution of this initiative, it became imperative to develop local experts to ensure that there is continuity in integrating the initiative across grade levels and subject areas. The district identified a Literacy Coordinator and subsequently identified Literacy Liaisons in each department to support the implementation and teacher support needed for successful implementation of the program. The Literacy Coordinator facilitates district planning and professional development and the Literacy Liaisons are selected from each department for the purpose of providing additional training. Literacy Liaisons are responsible to become the respective department's resident expert, and provide on-going support to teachers in terms of implementing the subject area department's selected initiative.

During the QAR Team interviews and observations, evidence was found that supported the notion that students are engaged in the learning process. Chemistry labs were observed, and it was noted that Special Education teachers facilitated conversations with students surrounding the topic of jobs and how to find jobs and what skills were necessary to be successful. There was also an observation of a biology classroom where the presentation provided an illustration of the urinary track and how foods eaten impact

the system. Other examples included students engaged in preparation for hands-on projects, guided notes and other relevant forms of instruction.

It is clear that there is a system-wide curriculum, and that instructional decisions are made on the basis of data analysis at all levels. This begins with the transition process to high school from middle school; there is a system of data collection established to provide insight as to how students are progressing academically, prior to their arrival to Leyden high schools. The data are used to provide placements to support students' entry and transition to high school. Teachers noted they support students in being successful; and students stated that teachers are helpful and provide assistance to students so that they are learning.

The data collected through the Mastery Manager program and the EPAS (value-added) process provides teachers and students alike with insight into the academic development of students during the time that they are enrolled in the school. Data are used to refer and require students to participate in systematic programs of academic reinforcement and recovery. Those programs include, but are not limited to, Summer Academy, Freshman Academy, Guided Study, and ACCESS.

Summer Academy is a four week program that provides assistance to incoming freshmen students. Students are identified for participation in the academy as a consequence of their performance on the EXPLORE test that is administered to all incoming students. Students who fail to attend this required opportunity are placed in the Freshman Academy. This academy approach provides for smaller class sizes and an instructional context to accelerate students to grade level skills. When students fail one or more courses, they are placed in Guided Study. This program meets daily after school for approximately one hour, and is intended to provide academic support to failing students. Five teachers are assigned to the program and are present on a daily basis. Students are "guided" through their homework during this supervised study hall. As four of the teachers are core subject area teachers, students may receive immediate support for difficulty that they are having in a given subject area. This system of support provides the infrastructure for students to become successful and feel supported. In fact, one student stated that "I was out, and they helped me transition back into the school." Another student added, "you can always get help here."

The climate of the district is clearly focused on academic excellence. Leyden High School District is challenged by the entry level skills of students coming from other districts. The difficulty is being able to influence partner schools that are members of different districts. Students enter Leyden high schools from eleven (11) partner schools. The communication, collaboration, and data between the middle school configurations (including K-8) and high school level is inconsistent and at times awkward. As the community is experiencing shifting demographics and the high school students are arriving in the freshman year less and less prepared to meet the requirements and challenging high school curriculum, the need for pre-assessment procedures and entry level programs will continue to be developed. The challenges for these systems of support are the ability to identify, diagnose and remediate in "real time."

The Leyden District is committed to the review and revision of curriculum as evidenced by a commitment to weekly department meetings that bring together members from both schools to collaborate in professional learning communities. The district is committed to the three guiding questions as follows: What are students learning? How do we know students are learning? and What do we do when students are not learning? These questions inform the professional dialog in the areas of curriculum and instruction, assessment, as well as response to intervention and supports. Teachers indicated that they clearly understand that they have the ability to influence the development of curricular offerings in the district. They report enthusiastic participation in Curriculum Projects during the summer.

During classroom observations, it was evident that instructional technology was readily available for use in each classroom. LCD projectors are mounted in every classroom and all teachers are issued a district laptop for their own professional use. More than adequate staff development is offered to ensure that teachers know how to utilize the technology in the classroom. SMART products are available for use in all classrooms.

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

- There is a thorough system of supports available for students, which serve as a safety net to abate failure.
- Weekly in-service program to align curricular programs.
- Summer Curriculum Projects that allow all members of the district to develop curricular offerings.

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

- Identify “real-time” indicators of students struggling in class and in need of immediate remediation.
- Identify an initiative to provide guidance to increased rigor in classroom activities in order to challenge middle level students.
- Bring partner schools to the table to discuss vertical alignment between levels, and continue to develop and evaluate transition programs and effectiveness.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Leyden Comm HS District 212 has met the accreditation requirements for the "Teaching & Learning" standard.

Standard 4. Documenting & Using Results

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

Description:

Leyden primarily uses the ACT EPAS system to measure student performance on standardized tests. The EPAS system is primarily used because the Illinois NCLB assessment is the ACT along with Work Keys and a state science test. Eighth grade students take the EXPLORE to provide baseline data along with placement recommendations. Students are given a PLAN test in the spring of freshman year and sophomores are given a retired ACT. Artifacts revealed the ACT questions broken down by skill for each sub test content area. Student interviews revealed that test data are reviewed by teachers so they understand which skills need review. A teacher in an English class was reviewing ACT like questions that related to dependent/independent clauses and subordinating conjunctions. District Administrator interviews revealed that the data from the mirror ACT scores of sophomores are disaggregated and given to each teacher of the students for the following year.

Academic data are stored in the eSchool management system. All staff members have access to these scores. Mastery Manager is also utilized to gather results from departmental common assessments. Teacher interviews revealed that teachers use Mastery Manager to determine skill deficiencies along with EPAS data. The questions from these assessments are broken down by skill and mastery of the skill is determined by the percentage correct. For example, a Geometry Honors Exam revealed that 71% of students mastered Properties of Triangles and Special Segments with a 60% cut off score. Selected

departments are using Mastery Manager for unit tests as well. In addition, the data revealed that they need to modify the math curriculum in the Academy Program. Students are not getting to Algebra II skills before they take the ACT and so this would adversely affect these students' ACT math scores.

Other artifacts revealed that data are collected on: math honors retention data, graduation data, Advanced Placement scores, and career planning. Advance placement scores reveal for 2009 that a substantial number of students scored 3 or higher on AP exams. In addition, an Individual Student Report illustrated students EXPLORE/PLAN and mirror ACT subtest and composite scores. Counselor interviews revealed that they discuss EPAS expected score gains with students along with suggesting the possibility of attending the ACT prep program.

The district has focused on reading literacy by developing a literacy improvement program with literacy coaches that work with teachers on reading strategies. Teachers are held accountable of these strategies as part of their formal evaluation. A Literary Coach discussed their role in working with staff in assisting with identifying strategies and designing rubrics to use for evaluation. A science teacher stated that the department decided to teach the Cornell Notes method in upperclass science classes. The principal discussed a pilot being developed in the Reading curriculum for next year to increase numeracy and literacy achievement.

The district has additionally focused on ACT WorkKeys. Practice exams are given to students and stored in eSchool. Professional Development activities were utilized to ensure teachers were familiar with WorkKeys reading and math skills. Key Train is used in a variety of classes to improve students applied math and reading for information skills. Employers in the district are asking students for their Work Keys scores as a condition of employment.

From 2004 -2009, Lynden's percentages of students who met or exceed on the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) have remained virtually static. In Reading, 51% of students met or exceeded in 2004 while 50% met or exceeded standards in 2009. In Math, 50% met or exceeded in 2004 while 51% met or exceeded in 2009. Lastly in Science, 52% met or exceeded in 2004 while 47% met or exceeded in 2009. In addition, the disparity of scores between Hispanics vs. White students was 62%-36% in 2001 and 60%-41% in 2009. At first glance, it appears that the district has not improved student achievement on these assessments in the last five years. But further review reveals a significant change in demographics over the last five years without a correlating significant drop in scores. The ethnic breakdown has shifted substantially in the White, Hispanic and Eastern European populations with an increase in lower social economic status.

Additionally, students are entering Leyden with more severe deficits in reading and math. Leyden is a high school district so it does not have direct control over the curricula and academic preparation of students entering their school. This is exacerbated by the fact that in Illinois the state test for elementary students is far less rigorous than the ACT EXPLORE. Thus elementary districts do not necessarily feel the need to adjust their curriculums to meet the more rigorous College and Career Readiness Standard benchmarks for eighth grade. An administrator stated they need more information about a student's K-8 experience, but they have difficulty getting this data from the partnering schools.

The data and assessment system is a part of the districts professional learning community asking: What are student learning? How do we know students are leaning? and What do we do when students are not learning? The assessment system is the vehicle by which curriculum and instruction is evaluated and Response to Intervention Supports are developed.

Leyden has developed a systematic process to look at PSAE data and wants to be known for more than test

scores. Even though they have numerous excellent programs and are raising scores from when students enter Leyden, stakeholders commented that there is a concern about the test scores that are published in the Chicago papers.

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

- Common course finals have been developed with individual skill sets tracked and analyzed through Master Manager.
- A system of standardized assessments (EPAS) and additional mirror ACT assessments has been implemented from freshman through junior year.
- Student grades are posted on-line with Home Access Center.
- The belief that “Test scores do not fully reflect who we are”.

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

- Develop and implement a common writing rubric across the curriculum to ensure student writing in all departments meets a common standard.
- Disaggregate the EPAS data, especially EXPLORE and PLAN data to better determine if all ability groups, especially average students, are achieving at an acceptable rate.
- Develop ways to increase the importance of the EXPLORE benchmark scores to partner schools by possibly offering to lead workshops for their staff.
- Investigate the correlation between the number of students in honors classes and the number of students who exceed on the Prairie State Exam.
- Formulate a system to evaluate various initiatives like the Reading Literacy Strategies to determine the success of specific strategies on student achievement.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Leyden Comm HS District 212 has met the accreditation requirements for the "Documenting & Using Results" standard.

Standard 5. Resource & Support Systems

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

Description:

Leyden High School District 212 is a district that attracts a large number of applicants for certified teacher and administrator vacancies. Interviews revealed that administration and staff are involved in the recruiting and hiring process. “We are looking for staff that “fit-in” to the culture of Leyden.” Teachers participate in a New Teacher Orientation Program. Artifacts including a Staff Handbook and District Personnel Policies were reviewed. All new teachers are assigned a mentor. At Leyden West High School, all new teachers’ pictures were displayed in the main hallway.

The district offers multiple opportunities for professional development. Late start Wednesdays provide an hour each week for staff development activities. In addition, Leyden has created a “university” and offers teachers opportunities to discuss topics such as lesson design, cooperative learning, and use of technology. Formal evaluations of teachers include the teacher’s use of researched based literacy strategies in their classes. This could mean anything from vocabulary development, think alouds, etc.

Teachers revealed that if we have an idea that will be good for kids, resources will be made available.

Support staff also revealed they have many opportunities for further training such as: maintenance procedures, transportation updates, special need disability classifications, and summer seminars.

Leyden is fortunate to be located in an area where approximately 96% of the school budget is derived from local property tax. The result of this funding allocation is over twice the state foundation level. This has enabled the district to not only compensate their employees very well, but also staff the building on a pupil-certified teacher level of approximately 12. Technology is abundant at Leyden. Each teacher is issued a district laptop with Office 2007, GroupWise and other instructional software and training. The student to computer ratio is 2.61-1. Projection units were observed in every classroom. In addition, a pilot project to begin next year will provide laptops to every student in three classes. The technology director stated, "Students may bring in their own laptops but at this time cannot connect to the internet."

The district has hired additional administrative and support staff over the last few years to meet the increasing needs of their population. A Director of Special Education and Director of ESL/Bilingual to oversee the special need students of in both of these programs. Additional staff that was hired included: Literacy Coaches, Coordinators of ACCESS transition program, Gifted Coordinator, Activity Directors, Guided Study Coordinators, deans assistants, and Director of Careers. In addition, interviews revealed that a teacher will be hired to work with students who are taking online credit recovery courses. Students stated that ACCESS really helped them get comfortable with the school and enable them to be more successful. The district is able to hire additional staff when additional programs are developed to meet additional needs of students.

Leyden provides various support services to meet the needs of students and families. Transportation is provided at various times after school for not only freshman who are required to attend the ACCESS program, but also activities and athletics.

Each student is assigned a counselor upon entering Leyden. In addition, social workers, psychologists, nurses, speech therapists and special education teachers provide services to students. An active Peer Mediation and Peer Counseling Program have been developed at Leyden. A student Peer Leader stated he was working with a student who was having a problem at home.

Both Leyden campuses are well maintained and provide exceptional opportunities for students not only in academics but also in the Fine Arts and Co-curricular programs. Over 100 clubs and athletic teams are available for participation by students. The facilities not only include regular classrooms but also gyms, fieldhouse, dance studio, swimming pool, tennis courts, athletic fields for football, soccer, baseball, softball, and track and field. Leyden also provides exceptional facilities for their Career and Technical Programs including, culinary arts, automotive, computer aided drafting, and construction. A student in Career Tech stated he really liked his Auto class and could enroll in metalworking if he wanted to travel to East campus. The Fine Arts program includes one of the largest marching bands in Illinois along with a state of the art auditorium for drama and musicals. The music department chairman stated the Board of Education understands the importance of the arts in our curriculum. The Board of Education along with the administration protects the elective course options for students.

Various community partnerships have been formed to support the programs at Leyden. The Leyden Renaissance Partnership Committee includes many individuals from the local business community. AT & T is providing funding for the Junior Achievement Program. A representative from Junior Achievement stated that they discuss with students financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and workplace readiness along with planning for the annual Career Fair and Business Expo and providing for field trips to area businesses.

Artifacts revealed a Disaster Emergency Plan with Code Red procedures. Security staff were visible in the building positively interacting with students. Security staff stated that there is constant open communication among the certified staff and administration.

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

- The district is able to provide excellent facilities and curricular and co-curricular programs with the tax base of the local communities.
- A comprehensive Career Tech Program and Fine Arts Program are available to students.
- Each staff member is issued a district laptop that includes various office, grade management, and email software.
- Numerous student support systems have been established to meet the changing academic and social emotional needs of the students.
- Professional Development and training is available and encouraged for certified and non-certified staff.

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

- Develop a more focused decision screen and evaluation process for approving expenditures to support new as well as continuing initiatives; this may become a necessity as revenue sources become more of an issue because of the economic downturn.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional," indicating that the Leyden Comm HS District 212 has met the accreditation requirements for the "Resource & Support Systems" standard.

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications & Relationships

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

Description:

District officials and the Leyden Schools and Community Relations committee have built effective relationships with various stakeholders. This has been achieved through a dedicated commitment to maintaining two-way lines of communication with all stakeholders. This two-way communication model illustrates a dynamic dual accountability model for the educators at Leyden and the families and community members. This was evident in community and parent interviews as stakeholders described the importance of staying involved and up to date of the successes, challenges, and activities that are taking place in the district. This emphasis revealed district communications as active and an opportunity and responsibility for all stakeholders to be a part of the two-way process.

The mission and vision is clearly understood by all stakeholders, and is displayed throughout both school buildings in the school district. During an institute day, the Superintendent spoke about the purpose of 212. This purpose was to get everyone on board to go to the next degree of excellence. "At 211 degrees, water is hot. At 212 degrees, it boils. With boiling water comes steam. And with steam, you can power a train." This motivated and encouraged students, staff, and stakeholders to become a part of the mission and vision of the district. Students, staff, and community members signed a wall located in the school to show their commitment of giving the extra degree in order to help the students of Leyden School District

#212 be successful. This demonstrates active participation and connections that flow to and from the district.

There is a wall of fame located at the entrance of the buildings that shows pictures of Leyden alumni graduates and describes their successes.

Leyden School District fosters collaboration with community stakeholders through the use of an interactive website in which parents can access their child's grades and attendance. System wide strategies have been implemented by the district to listen to and communicate with stakeholders. The students publish their own school newspaper titled "The HiLites". The principals and the superintendent also distribute newsletters to the learning community. There are monthly Board of Education meetings which offer an open forum for parents and community stakeholders to share their thoughts and concerns about issues within the school system. The school district also has an Operational Advisory Council (OAC) in which there are members of the various levels of the school system involved in hearing concerns and finding ways to mediate concerns that are brought forth by school stakeholders. This was evident through the review of meeting minutes, and also through interviews with various stakeholders. During parent interviews, parents stated that they feel comfortable contacting all school members to discuss concerns about their child. The parents also stated that feedback is prompt whether through emails or direct conversation. The school district also has an automated phone tree, "Alert Now," that keeps parents and the school community aware of events, announcements, or emergencies taking place in the schools and community area. The Parent Advisory Club meets monthly to discuss concerns and events concerning Leyden high schools. The principals provide information to the parents each month about the school and district during these meetings.

Leyden School District also provides various channels for getting students involved in the community and building community relations. Through Junior Achievement, provided by AT&T funding, students have the opportunity to "job shadow" at various local area businesses. Also, career fairs and business expos take place within the district on a large scale. There were 57 different organizations signed up for attendance on November 5, 2009, for the district wide career fair. These organizations included local businesses, restaurants, and city officials such as members from the police and fire departments. During interviews with parents and community members it was stated that many Leyden students receive jobs within local area businesses due to participation in work programs through the cooperative. This was also evident in community related artifacts.

In the student and parent handbooks there are clear expectations for student learning and goals for improvement. The district also has an ACCESS program to help freshman students transition from eighth grade to high school. Since Leyden School District has a diverse learning community, all communications and information are translated into Spanish, Bulgarian, and Polish to ensure that all families are kept informed of pertinent information. This helps to foster clear expectations across all languages within the community. Interpreters are also employed by the district for face-to-face communications with district personnel and families in the school community. Meaningful information is consistently offered to stakeholders in various modes and languages. One major component of communication that was discussed during interviews with various stakeholders was the ability for parents to access their child's academic information electronically. Parents stated that this is beneficial because it allows them to stay on top of how their child is doing. Students have access to up to date information on the progress they are making in their classes through this venue. Through the district website, the superintendent has her own blog in which students and stakeholders can communicate and respond to district events and concerns.

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

- Accountability for district communications and involvement is shared with both the district staff at

all levels and stakeholders.

- The mission and vision is clearly understood and accepted by all stakeholders.
- There are significant modes of communication among all stakeholders in the learning community in various formats and languages.
- Relationships between the district and external stakeholders have led to multiple business and community partnerships supporting student learning opportunities.
- Students are provided with leadership capabilities within the learning community and with the external community.

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

- Create and develop a systematic communications plan with partner schools to help foster aligned learning standards and expectations that will further help students be successful as they enter into high school. For example, invite parents from the partner school districts to participate in Leyden Parent Advisory meetings.
- Re-invent and capitalize on the residency check process, so that it serves the dual purpose of a residency check and positive welcome to the district.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional," indicating that the Leyden Comm HS District 212 has met the accreditation requirements for the "Stakeholder Communications & Relationships" standard.

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

Description:

The district has been successful in creating a shared vision that is supported by all stakeholders. There is a strong collaborative process that guides district and school improvement that aligns the functions of the district with the expectations for staff and student learning. The district maintains a current profile that describes the changes in student demographics and the performance of all learners. Goals and intervention strategies are documented in the district plan, and include school improvement plans. Results of student scores and class grades reflect the placement of students in the Freshman Academy and Guided Study programs. Differentiated strategies, class size, and extended day programs are used to support gaps in student achievement levels.

School improvement plans are aligned with the district's improvement goals. School improvement plans include interventions and support structures. The district allocates time for planning and engaging in continuous improvement efforts as evident in the district's Wednesday in-services led by Department Chairs and the multiple school improvement teams. It was evident that support is provided and direction is established for systemic improvement. SMART goals are used and this is articulated in the School Improvement Maps and monitored by the artifact Accountability Chart questions. These questions are integrated in the Professional Learning Community model.

Leyden High School District has demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement and this has been articulated at all district levels through providing a variety of on-going regularly scheduled team

meetings and planning councils including the following: Administrative Council, the Leadership Team, Student Instructional Assistance Steering Committee, combined decision making, Curriculum Advisory Council, and the School Improvement Team. During interviews committee and team members described a process that directly related to data review and planning for improvement. The district strategies were briefly discussed and supported by the teaching staff, specifically in the area of the Literacy Initiative.

In-services and researched-based professional development are provided for staff at all levels of the organization to support the efforts of improvement and strategies to support student achievement and engagement, as well as organizational effectiveness and growth.

The gap in achievement has been identified; however the focus on the individual student and encouraging student growth does not emphasize closing the gap. This approach considers growth of each individual student, and supports a comprehensive career focused curriculum. The data indicate that 75% of graduates attend post secondary education, and this is an indicator that the district measures as an indicator for success.

During interviews the educators, students, and community members communicated that they felt informed about progress in the district, and goal related initiatives that support student achievement. Leyden High School District 212 utilizes data to make informed decisions regarding curriculum, goal setting, improvement planning, and various levels of decision making. Data are collected from reporting systems such as Mastery Manager, eSchool, and Cognos reports. Data and information are communicated in a variety of ways including committee reports, department meetings, subject team reports, the school and district report cards, principal newsletters, articulation meetings with partner school teachers and administration, Superintendent level meetings, and the local media. The following list of reports provide a framework for communicating results that can be used by various stakeholders. These reports include the following: Mastery Manager (reports for standardized and local assessments), EPAS gains, WorkKeys, Academy progress, Explore and ISAT, and the district report card.

The evaluation and documentation framework reviews final exam assessments and state level comparisons. There is a need short cycle unit assessments during the semester in order to access implementation of initiatives and provisions for benchmarks, success, and adjustments for improvement purposes.

The district business partners are actively engaged in updating, consulting and providing resources including work experiences for students in career exploration and training.

The accountability chart artifact demonstrates an illustration of Professional Learning Community framework that supports continuous improvement through the essential questions regarding student learning, instruction, and interventions. Stakeholders and staff are able to articulate the steps that describe the ongoing continuous improvement process and plan that aligns the functions of the schools with the expectations for systemic student learning.

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

- The district has established collaborative teams to address all levels and areas of district and school improvement planning and implementation.
- Professional development is provided to all employment groups. Specific days are allocated for school improvement, district wide initiatives, and staff in-services.
- A Professional Learning Community framework supports a process for inquiry regarding improvement at the classroom level.

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

- Include disaggregation of data to reflect all levels of achievement and populations within the individual school buildings and the district to identify strategies to improve student achievement and close the achievement gap.
- Develop a monitoring system that will specifically inform instruction and identify areas of progress, or lack there of.
- Implement and support the strategies for problem solving.

Finding: Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational," indicating that the Leyden Comm HS District 212 has met the accreditation requirements for the "Commitment to Continuous Improvement" standard.

Quality Assurance Findings

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

Description

Leyden High School District 212 has a framework to monitor and document school effectiveness and student performance through several processes integrated with the district improvement plan, advisory committees, and school improvement teams.

Mastery Manager is used as a data warehouse for testing. PLAN and ACT exams are given to freshmen and sophomores and data processed with Mastery Manager. Scores are calculated and reported. WorkKeys testing follows the same procedure with the results being returned to students and teachers for reflection and corrective action.

Students entering Leyden take the Explore test to gather baseline data. Scores from the Explore are used for placement into the different levels of courses offered in the core departments. This information is also used for placement into the district's intervention programs to aid students in math and reading. Students may be placed into a summer academy program to improve their math and reading skills. Explore retests are given at the conclusion of the academy to measure improvement and the reclassification of courses being taken the freshman year. Likewise, students not making the necessary gains are enrolled in Academy Core Classes and a Reading program.

Feedback is provided to district stakeholders through various methods including the following: school board meetings, Administrative Council and department chair meetings, subcommittee meetings, department in-service meetings, Curriculum Advisory Council, School Improvement Team, Operational Advisory Council, building level teams meetings (WLAC and A-team), Student Council, the Leyden website, distributed meeting minutes, twitter pages, faculty newsletters, principal newsletters, board community communications, parent-teacher conferences, Freshmen parent night, college counseling events, students announcements, and press communiqués put out by the district publicist.

The Superintendent sends formal letters to the staff recognizing individual accomplishments, speaks at institute days offering encouragement, giving thanks, and updating the faculty on issues facing the school district.

Teacher evaluation provides teachers with feedback in both the formative and summative reports. The evaluation cycle occurs over a two year period with classroom observations occurring the second year. Non-tenured teachers are observed by three different people while tenured teachers are observed by their department chairperson.

AdvancED standards are integrated with the school improvement team (SIT) process and framework. This team uses data to determine the focus of the school district. Initiatives are developed in this committee and sent to other stakeholders for comment and input.

The inspirational vision and mission were developed with input from its stakeholders. A process involving numerous meetings and revisions evolved to a simple yet powerful statement "committed to excellence." The mission followed the same process and has provided the framework the district has used to meet its commitment

to excellence.

SIT team members presented each standard to the QAR team and provided a description of the adherence to the standard and the process for collecting evidence. Institute Days and in-service time are used to develop awareness of the standards, train teachers with the strategies used with the district initiatives, and provide time to work with the strategies. The evaluative process of teachers includes the teacher's participation and support of the district initiatives. The literacy initiative prompted the district to create a literacy team of in-house experts to work with the faculty and oversee the implementation of the best practices identified by the team.

Strengths

- Leyden has developed a collaborative foundation for quality assurance processes as demonstrated with literacy programs and the school improvement team in-put and monitoring.
- The district has effective communication strategies in place to share data and information regarding quality assurance with all stakeholders.

Opportunities

- Develop a process to assure that data are compiled, analyzed and communicated regarding progress of initiatives that support student achievement goals.
- Implement a strategy to support the review of initiatives in place in order to evaluate effectiveness.

Conclusion

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

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

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

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Fiona Hinds, Chair (Michigan NCA)
- Dr. Raymond Broderick, Vice Chair (North Central Association)
- Mr. Christopher Qualls, Team Member (Independence High School)
- Eric Carlton, Team Member (Banner Academy)
- Crystal Skoczylas, Team Member (Bridgeview Elementary School)

AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems

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

Vision and Purpose

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

Governance and Leadership

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

Teaching and Learning

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

Documenting and Using Results

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

Resource and Support Systems

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

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

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

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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