

Report of the
Quality Assurance Review Team
for
Whitwell Elementary School

David A. Smith, Principal

Review Dates: 04/21/2008 - 04/22/2008



AdvancED is the unified organization of the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE).

Quality Assurance Review Report

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About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

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

In 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 Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), a division of AdvancED, visited the Whitwell Elementary School in Whitwell, Tennessee on 04/21/2008 - 04/22/2008.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed the Principal, 2 members of the administrative team, 14 students, 13 parents, and 39 teachers. In addition, 1 Community Volunteer and 2 Grandparents 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.

- **The QAR recognizes the effective leadership that the administrative team is providing Whitwell Elementary School. It is evident that continuous improvement and support is a priority among the current administration.**

It was very evident in the climate of the school, as well as, in our interviews that the administration has brought Whitwell Elementary School together to focus on educating students to the best of their ability. The change in administration since last year has been a benefit to the school's overall performance.

The administration has made changes that expect, support, and assist the teachers in focusing on increasing student performance, as well as, working as grade level teams to accomplish this task. The parents also noted they are very happy with the way the new administration works well with the parents.

- **Whitwell Elementary School should be commended for their passion to instill the mission and vision statements throughout the school and community.**

The QAR team found the stakeholders, staff, and students are very aware of the mission statement of the school. The school's foundation begins with the mission and vision statements.

These statements are recited and discussed each morning on announcements to the entire school. The students have memorized these statements in their own words and it is written on the front door of the school. The stakeholders were very aware of these statements as well.

- **Whitwell Elementary School has shown a deep commitment among its faculty to continuous improvement in all facets. Teachers are using a variety of methods and resources to meet the needs of their students.**

The QAR team heard reports from stakeholders, students, and teachers about the different types of programs that have been started this school year to improve student achievement. These programs are working with the students in several different aspects; students in small groups, additional programs for the regular classroom, and after school programs. The school has also worked on getting the parents involved in how to work with their children through activities held after school.

The teachers and staff realize the importance of showing improved student achievement by raising their test scores and therefore have taken several steps to make this possible.

- **Whitwell Elementary School has developed a strong sense of collegiality among their staff. Community, connectedness, and collaboration, are all recognized as strengths by the Quality Assurance Review team.**

It was clearly evident to the QAR team that the faculty of W.E.S. collaborated on multiple levels to help achieve continuous school improvement. Minutes from weekly grade level meetings as well as meetings across grade levels helps support this.

The QAR team agreed with the faculty about the importance of the grade level and multi-grade levels to continuous improvement. Before this year, the faculty of WES were not actively engaged in these types of meetings. The new administration has made these types of meetings a priority.

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.

- **The QAR team recognized the important role that technology is playing at Whitwell Elementary School. The school would benefit from the addition of a school technology specialist in order to help disaggregate data that would in turn, assist the teachers in daily instruction.**

The QAR team discovered several new technology programs that Whitwell Elementary teachers are using to increase student performance and increase test scores. Currently, the computer lab has an assistant that works

with the teacher to assist the class. Some of the teachers also do not have access to the same number of computers in the classroom for students to take advantage of these programs. The teachers also find it very time consuming to disaggregate the data from the test results for each individual student as well as teach the other subjects.

A school technology specialist would assist the students and teachers in making the most of these new programs to monitor student performance. This new role would be an asset to the classroom teachers in having assistance in disaggregating individual student's test data. This information is also beneficial to parents and students as well.

- **Whitwell Elementary School should implement the use of technology to better foster communication with parents, community and all stakeholders.**

The QAR team discovered that communication between parents and teachers is not being handled by email. We also found the school's web site is not being used as efficiently as it could. The school can communicate more effectively if it will begin using technology with their parents and community.

Whitwell Elementary School has a difficult time contacting parents due to many working in another time zone and several miles away from the school. For those parents that have email, this would be a fast and efficient way to communicate to parents. The school webpage can also be used more effectively to communicate information to parents and the community by posting the school calendar, special events, classroom announcements and activities, pictures, etc.

- **It is evident to the QAR that programs need to be implemented to address the needs of the higher achieving students in all grade levels.**

Whitwell Elementary need to identify students who are high achievers and provide them with the additional opportunities they need to make gains. The school has a program that is beginning to address the needs of these students.

It was discovered that the teachers have identified some students who need to be challenged and one program was experimented with to address these needs. We encourage a program that includes all grade levels and that reaches more students with this need. This will help all students to reach their potential.

- **Based on information from various sources, Whitwell Elementary School needs to provide additional training to all teachers on interpretation of formative assessments and all other data in order to improve student performance.**

The QAR team discovered the teachers are not able to interpret the test data of the school nor the student data. The stakeholders were not aware of the school's report card scores and the significance of test data to the state of Tennessee.

In order to increase student achievement, the teachers must be able to understand and comprehend the strengths and weaknesses of the students. The school also needs to be able to interpret test data for each grade level and the entire school. The school will work more efficiently if they are also able to discuss these test results with parents.

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, provides an online network of peer-to-peer practices, best practices, and resources and tools designed to help schools with their improvement efforts. Available any where, any time, the network can be queried for information on a variety of school improvement subjects. The AdvancED Research and Development division provides research, handbooks, and tools to assist schools with continuous improvement. In addition, your state office provides hands-on professional development and ongoing technical assistance. Contact your state office for more information on the range of resources available to you.

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the visit, the Quality Assurance Review Team submits an accreditation recommendation to AdvancED for state review and for action at the national level by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the school. Upon receiving its accreditation, the school should celebrate its achievement with the school community. The SACS CASI accreditation seals are available at 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 Whitwell Elementary School demonstrates that it meets the seven standards for accreditation. The findings of the Quality Assurance Review Team regarding the standards for accreditation are summarized on the following pages.

Standard 1. Vision and Purpose

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

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

Whitwell Elementary School's mission statement, "*Our mission is to educate all children by creating and/or nurturing their desire to learn and teach the necessary skills to empower them to become lifelong learners, good decision makers, and productive citizens.*" is dedicated to preparing students for success in an ever-changing world." The QAR team found that Whitwell's mission statement was updated in 2005 by the faculty and staff of WES. The QAR team also found vast evidence that the school community does indeed know the mission statement, and is endeavoring to fulfill the mission statement. The mission statement is quoted each morning on the morning announcements, which are watched on TV in the classrooms and are led by the administration and students of the school. Additionally, several grade levels have committed the mission statement to memory (in their own words). The mission statement is also printed on the glass doors that serve as the main entrance of the school. In addition to this, it is posted in various rooms and hallways throughout the school.

The school's vision statement; "*To create a positive and safe learning environment that allows all students to grasp and apply the skills being taught to enable them to become lifelong learners, good decision makers and productive citizens.*" is also widely known among the students and stakeholders of the school. The team did find that Whitwell Elementary School was indeed offering their students a wide variety of curricula that covered the various needs of their students.

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

Some of the strengths that the QAR noticed in relation to Standard 1 are:

- Common beliefs about the importance of academics are shared by administrators, students, and teachers.
- Whitwell Elementary School has achieved a wide commitment of all groups and stakeholders to its vision and purpose. The widespread knowledge of the mission statement is evident in all facets of the school.
- Whitwell Elementary School illustrated a significant commitment to students.

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

The QAR team believes that W.E.S. is doing an outstanding job in examining, teaching, sharing, and following their vision statement. W.E.S. is a model school for their practices and approach of their vision. The only recommendations for this standard is to continue in the education of all stakeholders to the mission.

Finding: Whitwell Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" 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:

Whitwell Elementary School is fortunate to have community and faculty minded administration. It was obvious that Whitwell's administration team has an excellent working relationship with the faculty, students, and parents. Even though the administration is in their first year at WES, they have made a smooth transition and are well respected and accepted by their peers. The QAR team found the administration to be well liked and respected by the faculty and community. Interviews conducted by the QAR team revealed that the principal involved all members of the school community in the leadership process. The faculty shared with the QAR team that several new programs are currently being introduced to ensure that Whitwell Elementary School is a place where students of all learning levels are being reached.

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

Some of the strengths that the QAR noticed in relation to Standard 2 are:

- The faculty repeatedly shared how excited they were about the many different professional development opportunities that have been made available.
- The administration is providing opportunities for teachers to take leadership roles in the school. Through the grade level deans, each grade level is given the opportunity to take ownership and help make decisions pertaining to the areas of the school that affect them.
- Whitwell Elementary School has developed a strong sense of collegiality, community, connectedness, collaboration, and "just like a family," among stakeholders. The QAR recognizes that the new administration is instrumental in building this culture.

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

The QAR team would like W.E.S. to address the following suggestion for improvement that directly pertains to Standard 2:

- The administration needs to ensure that all teachers are trained on the interpretation of their standardized test data. This training will help WES teachers address the areas of concern. Through faculty interviews, the QAR found that many teachers are unsure of their ability to look at their scores and use them in a way that drives instruction.

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

Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

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

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

Whitwell Elementary School uses the "Blueprint for Learning: A Teacher's Guide to the Tennessee Curriculum" to guide the instructional objectives in each grade level. Teachers meet twice a week within their grade level to review, adjust and update instructional goals. The QAR team found that student performance indicators are posted in every classroom. Think Link, Starfall, Star Reading, Openbook, and Accelerated Reader are used to supplement the state curriculum.

Each school day begins with 30 minutes of sustained silent reading. An intervention reading specialist works with at-risk students to improve reading achievement. Related Arts teachers work with kindergarten students on a daily basis during the first thirty minutes of school.

Teachers communicate student progress by sending home weekly test folders, formative assessment reports, progress reports, newsletters, and report cards. Teachers hold parent teacher conferences twice a year and host several evening events to share and promote reading. The administration and teachers have an open door policy to conference with parents about their child's individual academic achievements and needs at any time.

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

Some of the strengths that the QAR noticed in relation to Standard 3 are:

- The administration, teachers, and staff have all taken ownership of the instructional practices that support the mission and vision of the school.
- Whitwell Elementary illustrates a significant commitment to student academic achievement.
- The administration is committed to grade level collaboration on instructional practices.
- The administration has shown a commitment to purchasing new instructional tools that are necessary to improve classroom instruction.

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

The QAR team would like W.E.S. to address the following suggestions for improvement that directly pertain to Standard 3:

- The students at Whitwell Elementary would benefit from inclusion to address academic achievement.
- With the increased use of technology, Whitwell Elementary School would benefit from a School Technology Specialist (STS) to help teachers and students increase academic achievement.

- There is a need to identify and address the academic needs of students who are gifted in grade K – 4 at Whitwell Elementary School.

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

Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results

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

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

Whitwell Elementary School is successful in meeting this standard by using a variety of comprehensive assessments based on clearly defined performance measures. They are currently using ThinkLink, Star Reading, Accelerated Reader, Compass Learning, Openbook, and DIBELS to assess the students as well as TCAP results. All grade levels plan together two times a week to align their curriculum standards with the state of Tennessee. They are also working toward analyzing the student's strengths and weaknesses to determine the direction of student performance. These assessments enable teachers to determine interventions that will help meet the needs of the at-risk students.

The school uses these assessments frequently throughout the year to evaluate student performance to help guide future instruction. These assessments are beneficial not only to the classroom teacher but administration, parents, and stakeholders. However, the QAR team found that since most of these assessments depend on technology, Whitwell Elementary would benefit from more computers in the classroom for student use. A full time technology teacher would be a great addition to assist students with these assessments and assist teachers in compiling the test data.

The QAR team found that the teachers are not able to interpret their test data as effectively and efficiently as needed to further student performance and school success.

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

Some of the strengths that the QAR noticed in relation to Standard 4 are:

- A shared approach to related arts teachers working with leveled groups of kindergarten students during sustained silent reading time has proven effective.
- Grade level meetings have brought teams together and aligned the curriculum standards with the state. This team approach is beneficial to all students and the entire school in working together to improve student performance.

- W.E.S. should continue their focus on recognition and rewards for the AR program.
- The teachers should continue using a variety of types of differentiated instruction in the classroom.

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

The QAR team would like W.E.S. to address the following suggestions for improvement that directly pertain to Standard 4:

- Attain training for teachers/administration in interpreting test scores/data to increase student performance.
- Acquire funds for a full time technology teacher to continue with the current assessments in place to meet the needs of the students.
- The 4th grade teachers should meet with the 5th grade teachers to receive feedback from the TCAP Writing Assessment.

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

Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems

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

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

Whitwell Elementary provides a safe and conducive learning environment for all children. The school has an effective discipline policy in place to ensure a safe and orderly environment.

The administration encourages on-going learning opportunities for the teachers. Tennessee Tech is using the facility to provide Master courses for teachers at Whitwell Elementary and other Marion County schools, as well as, teachers from other schools in surrounding counties. Several Whitwell Elementary teachers are taking advantage of this opportunity and other additional professional development opportunities that Tennessee Tech provides.

The administration recruits highly qualified teachers to teach at the school. New teachers are provided a mentor to guide them and a two-day forum in the summer.

The school is fully funded and staffed by the BEP 2.0, Title I, At-risk, and other various grants. Through extended contract, teachers are able to provide the students with after school tutoring and summer school programs to help improve student academic achievement.

The school provides guidance for each class on a weekly basis. Students with disabilities are serviced through the resource teacher. There is a CDC classroom in grades K-4 for students with severe disabilities. The teachers work with students in their classrooms to meet their academic, social, and emotional needs. A district psychologist is available when needed to provide testing for students who need additional assistance with academic achievement that is below or above grade level.

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

Some of the strengths that the QAR noticed in relation to Standard 5 are:

- Whitwell Elementary is effectively using their funding to support the instruction of the school by increasing the use of instructional technology in the classroom. The use of the Accelerated Reader Program, Starfall, Star Reading, Openbook, etc. assesses student learning weekly.
- The administration, teachers and support staff are utilizing their resources to identify and work with students who are at-risk.
- The administration is committed to improving the quality of instruction by using monies to purchase additional instructional classroom tools and technology hardware and software. The teachers are willing to take part in professional growth opportunities offered at school, within the county, or outside of the county to further their knowledge of the best instructional practices.
- The administration, faculty and staff use their resources to create a welcoming, safe and stimulating learning environment for the students.

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

The QAR team would like W.E.S. to address the following suggestions for improvement that directly pertain to Standard 5:

- With a student population of over 600 students, the students would benefit from an additional guidance counselor at the school. One guidance counselor is able to meet with each class once a week. With an additional guidance counselor more time would be available to work with students in classroom, small groups, or individually.
- The school would benefit from a School Technology Specialist in order to help teachers individualize computer lessons, interpret data, and assist in technology lessons.
- High achieving students at Whitwell Elementary would benefit from an enrichment program to help meet their academic needs.
- The administration and teachers could increase the use of technology to communicate with stakeholders, parents, and the community by further developing the school's website, creating individual classroom websites, and a list of emails.

Finding: Whitwell Elementary 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:

The Whitwell community has embraced this elementary school to help foster a loving, learning environment. The community has helped the school in many areas; award incentives, parent nights, and school-wide programs such as AR.

The QAR team found that the parents of W.E.S. love their school, teachers, and administration. They admit they receive information about their children's progress weekly but don't always have time to look over all the information. The QAR discovered parents do not participate in parent/teacher conferences. W.E.S should look at different ideas of how to change this attitude. The parents are also not aware of the school's test data and do not have a good understanding how to interpret test scores.

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

Some of the strengths that the QAR noticed in relation to Standard 6 are:

- The school has a great working relationship with the Whitwell community. This relationship should continue to grow to benefit the school, students, parents, and therefore the community as a whole.
- The teachers use a consistent schedule to communicate to parents about student performance, for example daily homework reports, test folders, AR reports, planners, etc.
- W.E.S. has added some special parent nights to encourage parental support with the school. This should continue to develop and grow.
- The "Open Door" policy the administration established has fostered effective communication between the teachers, parents, and stakeholders.

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

The QAR team would like W.E.S. to address the following suggestions for improvement that directly pertain to Standard 6:

- W.E.S. is encouraged to find a way to get the parents to school and learn how to read/interpret test data. The parents also need to be informed of their child's strengths and weaknesses.
- Updating the school website with school announcements, classroom information, pictures of school events, etc. would give information to parents and the stakeholders.
- Email should be considered an efficient way of communicating to parents in some situations.

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

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

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

The faculty and staff of Whitwell Elementary School community have clearly embraced the concept of continuous improvement. Although the QAR team found little evidence of strong continuous improvement principals before last summer, it was clearly evident that the new administration has made continuous improvement a priority. Through faculty interviews, the QAR heard numerous times about how the expectation level in regard to school improvement has changed. The faculty are now required to meet across all grade levels weekly. The administration has led the faculty to become focused on better student performance, and all programs that they do have that direct goal as their foundation.

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

Some of the strengths that the QAR noticed in relation to Standard 7 are:

- The administration has laid a good foundation for continuous improvement. The QAR recognizes that the administration is playing a key role in this process.
- The teachers use a consistent schedule to communicate to parents about student performance, for example daily homework reports, test folders, AR reports, planners, etc.

The school as a whole needs to continue using the mission and vision statements as their foundation for student performance.

The QAR feels professional development should continue to be available for all staff in their area of interest. They also need to continue sharing information from these workshops with the faculty. This will benefit other teachers as well as all the students.

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

The QAR team would like W.E.S. to address the following suggestions for improvement that directly pertain to Standard 7:

- W.E.S. is encouraged to continue what has begun with a focus on getting parents involved. The staff needs to improve parent/teacher conference participation.

W.E.S. should use 2007-08 T-CAP data to evaluate the programs that were initiated this year to improve student achievement. The school should try to determine which programs were beneficial for the students academic success.

W.E.S. is encouraged to continue working together as a staff to improve student achievement. The use of all teachers in many ways to achieve this goal is a positive step for all students.

Finding: Whitwell Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" 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 David A. Smith, members of the professional staff, students, parents and other community representatives for their hospitality throughout the visit. The team wishes the school and its students much success in the quest for excellence through SACS CASI accreditation with AdvancED.

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Mr. Sean Corcoran, Chair (Brainerd Baptist School)
- Mrs. Agatha Kusenda, Team Member (Brainerd Baptist School)
- Mrs. Angie Baker - Templeton, Team Member (Rutherford County School System-Campus School)

AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

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

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.