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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) are accreditation divisions of AdvancED.

Standards Assessment Report

Alabama Christian Academy
4700 Wares Ferry Rd Montgomery, Alabama 36109-3304
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Introduction & Purpose of the Report

The Standards Assessment Report is designed to serve as a valuable self-assessment and as a tool to help schools prepare for their Quality Assurance Review (QAR). The report is based on the AdvancED standards, which serve as the foundation of the accreditation process. In order to earn and maintain accreditation, schools must meet the AdvancED standards, engage in a process of continuous improvement, and host a Quality Assurance Review at least once every five years. The Standards Assessment Report engages the school community in an in-depth assessment of each of the seven AdvancED standards. In completing the report, the school identifies the data, information, evidence, and documented results that validate that it is meeting each standard. This self assessment helps the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

The Standards Assessment Report also serves as the primary resource for the Quality Assurance Review Team, which uses the report to prepare for the visit to the school. The team uses insights gathered from the report and information obtained during the on-site visit to provide feedback to the school and to make an accreditation recommendation.

Structure of the Report

The Standards Assessment Report is organized by the AdvancED standards. For each standard, the report includes four sections:

1) Indicators rubric; 2) Indicators evidence; 3) focus questions; and 4) overall assessment. Each section reinforces the other sections by asking a question that builds on the prior section.

The Indicators rubric enables the school to assess the degree to which practices and/or processes are in place that indicate adherence to the standard and Indicators. For each Indicator, the school may check if the practices and/or processes are highly functional in the school, operational, emerging, or not evident. The school should use the rubric as an opportunity to ask itself challenging questions and to respond with accurate answers geared toward self-improvement. After completing the rubric, the school can quickly see areas of strength and opportunity. The section asks, "To what degree are the noted practices/processes in place?"

The Indicators evidence allows school personnel to think about the practices and/or processes being implemented and identify evidence that will support its responses to the Indicators rubric and focus questions. This section helps school stakeholders engage in a discussion about how it knows it is adhering to the standards. The section asks, "What practices/processes are being implemented, and are they effective?" or said another way, "How do we know we are doing what we say we are doing?"

The focus questions allow the school to expand on and think more deeply about the responses to the Indicators rubric. The focus questions provide an opportunity for the school to describe the systematic and systemic processes that are in place to support its ability to meet the Indicators. The section asks, "How are the practices/processes implemented?"

The overall assessment describes how well schools are implementing practices and/or processes and the impact these practices and/or processes have on student results and overall school effectiveness. The overall assessment helps schools judge where they are in relation to each standard. The "operational" level is required in order to demonstrate

meeting the standard. The section asks, "How well are we meeting the standard overall?"

Together, the Indicators rubric, Indicators evidence, focus questions, and overall assessment provide a comprehensive view of how schools address each of the standards.

Demographics

Public/Non-public: **Non-public**

School Type: **Unit**

Charter School:

Enrollment: **1007**

Gender at School: **Co-Ed**

Grade(s): **PK,K,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12**

Location Type: **Suburban**

Religious Denomination: **Christian - Non-Denominational**

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.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it commits to a shared purpose and direction. The school establishes expectations for student learning aligned with the school's vision that is supported by school personnel and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and school effectiveness. The school's vision guides allocations of time and human, material, and fiscal resources.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school.

The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Indicators Evidence: For each Indicator, click the (Add Evidence) link to provide examples of evidence that support the rubric response.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident Little or no evidence exists

Emerging Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice

Operational Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented

Highly Functional Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

INDICATORS: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

1.1 Establishes a vision for the school in collaboration with its stakeholders:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Leadership demonstrates stakeholder support

Mission Statement visible throughout school and/or district

Policies/Procedures manuals/handbooks demonstrating stakeholder involvement in development of mission

Stakeholder perception data used to develop mission

Stakeholders are knowledgeable about vision, mission

Strategic Plans include mission

Vision, mission statements include all elements of stakeholder inclusion

1.2 Communicates the vision and purpose to build stakeholder understanding and support:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Handbooks include vision, mission

Meetings incorporate elements of vision, mission

Signage includes vision, mission

Stakeholders are knowledgeable about vision, mission

Website/page includes vision, mission

1.3 Identifies goals to advance the vision:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Goals distributed through publications and communication

Goals which are data-driven and measurable

School improvement plan includes vision, mission

School improvement planning incorporates vision, mission

Stakeholders demonstrate involvement in and knowledge of goal setting

Strategic Plan includes vision, mission

Strategic planning incorporates vision, mission

1.4 Develops and continuously maintains a profile of the school, its students, and the community:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Annual Report

Community-based data

Newsletters, articles

Publications, brochures, handbooks

School Improvement Plan

School/district profile is used during parent/community meetings

School/district profile is used during staff meetings

Stakeholders demonstrate knowledge of school/district profile

1.5 Ensures that the school's vision and purpose guide the teaching and learning process:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Curriculum demonstrates alignment with vision, mission

Extra-curricular activities incorporate vision, mission

Instructional practices demonstrate alignment with vision, mission

Lesson plans demonstrate alignment with vision, mission

School Improvement Plan demonstrates alignment of vision, mission with teaching and learning

School improvement planning demonstrates alignment with vision, mission

Strategic Plan demonstrates alignment of vision, mission and teaching and learning

1.6 Reviews its vision and purpose systematically and revises them when appropriate:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Agendas, minutes for strategic planning demonstrate review

Strategic Plan demonstrates review

Strategic planning process demonstrates review by stakeholders

Focus Questions:

1. What is the process for establishing and building understanding of and commitment to the vision statement among stakeholders?

ACA establishes and builds understanding of and commitment to the vision statement among stakeholders by posting the vision statement on the website, displaying it around the school building, and publishing it in on-line handbooks. The mission statement is repeated to the students frequently in various settings. Board meetings, VIP committee meetings, Leadership Team meetings and President's Council meetings are conducted in light of understanding and commitment to the vision statement. VIP or "Volunteers in Partnership" is a vital group of parents. They offer their talents, services, and support to help our school in a variety of ways. They provide encouragement and assist in various fundraising efforts. The Leadership Team consists of teachers, Board members, and administrators who plan and assist in the implementation of ACA's Habitudes program, a dynamic program for developing leadership skills in both teachers and students. Booster groups include vision statements in their support of our extra-curricular activities.

2. What is the school's process for developing a profile and systematically maintaining and using information that describes the school, its students, and their performance?

The school's Profile Committee, under the direction of the superintendent, oversees the development and maintenance of the school's profile data. Such is updated regularly and various portions made available to stakeholders. ACA's website

(www.alabamachristian.com) features a detailed mini-profile of the school under its “About Us” menu. Periodic updates of data are provided to the Board of Trustees at its bi-monthly meetings.

Additionally, printed brochures are made available to stakeholders and prospective stakeholders via public relations activities. Printed materials include ACA’s application packet, copies of the Eagle Vision (newsletter), ads and articles in local newspapers and magazines such as the Montgomery Advertiser, Montgomery Parents and River Region’s Journey. Additionally, copies of plans and reports concerning the school’s most recent financial campaigns have been distributed to stakeholders and are available for review. The Five-Star campaign ran from 2006 through the later part of 2009. Beginning in December 2009, the current annual campaign entitled “Ministry Partners” was launched.

3. How does the leadership ensure that the school's vision, purpose, and goals guide the teaching and learning process?

The leadership ensures the school’s vision, purpose, and goals by constantly evaluating the learning process in order to be certain the teaching/instruction is aligned with the school’s mission, vision, purpose and stated goals. In-service meetings promote the continuation of improvements in instruction. Teachers are observed on a regular basis with evaluations given promptly. Lesson plans are posted on Edline making them accessible to parents and students. Alabama Christian Academy is constantly striving for excellence in all facets of its operation. ACA’s Board of Trustees always considers the vision and purpose of the school when making difficult decisions. On occasions when administrators meet with parents/guardians regarding academic or disciplinary issues, they make reference to the school’s vision.

4. What process is used to ensure that the vision and purpose of the school remain current and aligned with the school's expectations for student learning and school effectiveness?

A School Improvement Plan (SIP) committee dedicated to ensuring that the vision and purpose of the school remain current and aligned with the school’s expectations for student learning and school effectiveness

meets regularly. Administrators observe and evaluate teachers to ensure instruction is appropriate for the mission and purpose. In-service and training for new teachers develops awareness of expectations for carrying out the vision and purpose. New teachers are assigned mentors who work closely with them in order to provide information, guidance, support and encouragement. Handbooks are evaluated and amended annually to reflect the school's vision. All employees are given the opportunity to have input into the process of handbook revision. Student testing indicates whether expectations for learning and effectiveness are being met.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school has committed to a shared purpose and direction. The school has clearly defined expectations for student learning aligned with the school's vision that is supported by school personnel and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and school effectiveness. The school's vision guides allocations of time and human, material, and fiscal resources. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "operational" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Standard 2. Governance and Leadership

STANDARD: The school provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and school effectiveness.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it has leaders who are advocates for the school's vision and improvement efforts. The leaders provide direction and allocate resources to implement curricular and co-curricular programs that enable students to achieve expectations for their learning.

Leaders encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for school improvement among stakeholders. The school's policies, procedures, and

organizational conditions ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school.

The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Indicators Evidence: For each Indicator, click the (Add Evidence) link to provide examples of evidence that support the rubric response.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident Little or no evidence exists

Emerging Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice

Operational Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented

Highly Functional Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully

integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

INDICATORS: In fulfillment of this standard, the school operates under the jurisdiction of a governing board that:

2.1 Establishes policies and procedures that provide for the effective operation of the school:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Agendas, minutes of governing authority meetings

Governance Policy handbook: board, district, school

Governing authority affirms understanding of their role in the operation of the school/district

Local, state, and federal policy handbooks

Organizational chart

Procedural policies: emergencies, contact information, calling tree, discipline, due process, logistics, placement and transfer

Staff and students affirm their understanding of emergency and operational procedures

Staff and/or student handbooks

Stakeholders affirm understanding of operational procedures

Students and staff affirm their understanding of discipline policies and due process

2.2 Recognizes and preserves the executive, administrative, and leadership prerogatives of the administrative head of the school:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Governing Board Policies demonstrate leadership prerogatives

Organizational chart

Policies demonstrate protocols for remediation and due process

Roles and responsibilities of governing board, advisory councils, and ad hoc committees are clearly outlined

Staff are knowledgeable about leadership prerogatives

Staff are knowledgeable about organizational chart

Staff demonstrate knowledge about due process

Succession plan demonstrates leadership transitions

2.3 Ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Documentation of access to legal counsel

Documentation of adherence to ethical business practices

Documentation of compliance with all regulations regarding copyright law, intellectual property, and international restrictions

Documentation of resolutions of any complaints

Documentation of State and Federal Compliances and Assurances, including NCLB/Title I, EEO, Title IX

Documentation of utilization of all requirement elements of curriculum standards

Documentation with all regulations that apply to accreditation by NCA CASI, SACS CASI, or AdvancED

Staff are knowledgeable about access to legal counsel

Staff are knowledgeable about curriculum standards

Staff demonstrates use of curriculum standards in the teaching and learning process

Staff responsible for the implementation of state and/or federal programs are knowledgeable about compliance

Stakeholders affirm compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity practices and procedures

Stakeholders affirm compliance with ethical business practices

Stakeholders are involved in the establishment and monitoring of adherence to all regulations

INDICATORS: In fulfillment of this standard, the school has leadership that:

2.4 Employs a system that provides for analysis and review of student performance and school effectiveness:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Record of student performance data analysis

Student database management system

Student performance data are used during staff meetings

Student performance data are used for extra-curricular planning

Student performance database for formative assessments

2.5 Fosters a learning community:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

All stakeholders are knowledgeable about the rules of engagement and behavior

Artifacts displayed throughout the school/district demonstrate inclusion of all stakeholder communities

Professional learning plan includes all stakeholders

Rules of appropriate engagement and behavior are prominently displayed

Stakeholders affirm a sense of belonging and engagement

Website provides forum for feedback and dialogue

2.6 Provides teachers and students opportunities to lead:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Accreditation team members are representative of staff and students
Agenda and minutes of meetings demonstrate shared leadership with staff

Organizational chart demonstrates shared leadership responsibilities

Policies for staff/student leadership opportunities outside the school/district environment

Staff affirm their involvement in shared leadership opportunities

Staff and students affirm their involvement in the accreditation process

Student governance is formalized with bylaws, policies, and procedures

Students are involved in student governance

2.7 Provides stakeholders meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Accreditation team members are representative of stakeholder groups

Calendar, agendas, minutes of stakeholder meetings

Committee members are representative of all stakeholder groups

Parent/community compacts

Stakeholders affirm their involvement in the accreditation process

Stakeholders affirm their involvement in the decision-making process

Stakeholders affirm their involvement on committees

2.8 Controls curricular and extracurricular activities that are sponsored by the school:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Policy demonstrates roles, responsibilities, and compensation for staff responsible for co-curricular and extracurricular organizations, events, and activities

Record of co-curricular organizations and activities: calendars, membership, sponsors

Record of extra-curricular events and activities: calendars, rosters, chaperones

Staff and students affirm involvement in co-curricular organizations and activities

Staff and students affirm involvement in extra-curricular events and activities

2.9 Responds to community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Record of Advisory Committee: calendars, membership, minutes

Stakeholder survey data

Stakeholders affirm that leadership hears and acts upon their suggestions and recommendations

2.10 Implements an evaluation system that provides for the professional growth of all personnel:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Documentation of salary schedules

Handbooks demonstrate staff evaluation system

New staff orientation materials

Policies demonstrate evaluation criteria, timelines, and termination processes

Policies demonstrate professional growth opportunities

Professional development plan for all staff

Staff are engaged in professional learning opportunities

Staff are knowledgeable about opportunities for professional growth

Staff are knowledgeable about their evaluation criteria and timeline

Walk-about demonstrate review of instructional practices

Focus Questions:

1. What is the process for establishing, communicating, and implementing policies and procedures for the effective operation of the school?

Each school year, the school's administration requests input from stakeholders regarding policy or procedure modifications or changes. In a planning session, administrators, department chairs, and counselors evaluate and develop ideas and, then, further discuss proposed changes in order to format them into a proposal to present to the Board of Trustees. Subsequently, the Board evaluates and discusses all aspects of the proposed changes or modifications, and then, a vote is taken concerning each proposal. After a policy or procedure is adopted officially, it is communicated through various means such as handbooks, website, classroom overviews, etc. The implementation of the policies and procedures begins in the classroom with faculty and staff and then, with the administration, according to protocol.

2. What process does the school's leadership use to evaluate school effectiveness and student performance?

The school's leadership evaluates the school's effectiveness through compiled data that has been recorded over a number of years, as well as through surveys of stakeholders both current and past. Past achievements from all aspects of the school (academic, athletic, service, etc.) illustrate the effectiveness of ACA. Regarding the evaluation of student performance, classroom assessments and evaluations such as testing over subject matter, progress reports, the use of Edline and standardized testing are used. Results are compiled and monitored by the faculty and administration.

3. In what ways are stakeholders, including staff, given opportunities to provide leadership and to contribute to the decision-making process?

Stakeholders are given numerous opportunities for leadership through organizations such as the VIP program, the President's Council, and our various Booster Clubs. ACA's faculty is involved through class sponsorships, coaching opportunities, club sponsorships, the leading of small groups and chapel. Students are involved in organizations such as

SGA, NHS, Key Club, Elite Eagles, SALT, LIGHT, and our Middle School ministry program. SALT (Student Action Leadership Team) is a leadership and mentoring program for specially chosen and trained juniors and seniors. LIGHT is a similarly designed program for freshman and sophomores.

As mentioned previously, there is a process in place for involving stakeholders in decision-making regarding the school. A major in-service training effort was made during the 2009-10 school year with the institution of the Habitudes program. This approach seeks not only to make leaders of regular classroom teachers, but also to teach students how to become productive school leaders themselves. Throughout the current school year, a staff development leadership team consisting of parents, students, teachers, administrators and Board members has met to plan various programs and activities for our teachers. In turn, our Bible teachers have incorporated the attitudinal and service dimensions of Habitudes directly into their curriculum in order to build and encourage student leaders.

4. What policies and processes are in place to ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation?

Fairness and equity are at the heart of ACA's mission as we strive to glorify God by providing a quality, Christ centered education for all of our students. Learning opportunities for are available to all students based on ability and interest. Students are encouraged to reach for excellence. Efforts to meet individual student needs include access and choice of advanced classes such as AP English, AP Calculus, AP U.S. History, AP European History and AP Biology. Opportunities for students to take math classes at a slower pace, evaluation of reading level groups in K/5, the provision of secondary level after-school help sessions, and the availability of tutoring before and after school are also utilized. ACA extends its core belief regarding the provision of equitable learning opportunities and innovations to its faculty and staff as well. The school provides access to and financial help with workshops, conferences, special inspirational motivation programs such as

Habitudes, continuing education classes, and the opportunity to achieve higher degrees of learning.

Overall Assessment:

Highly Functional: The school has leaders who are advocates for the school's vision and improvement efforts.

The leaders provide direction, lend support, and systematically allocate resources for systemic and sustainable implementation of curricular and co-curricular programs that enable students to achieve expectations for their learning. Leaders ensure collaboration and shared responsibility for school improvement among stakeholders with clearly defined expectations for each stakeholder group. The leaders provide stakeholders meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership. The school's policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation and are deeply embedded in the way the school functions. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "highly functional" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

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

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning that provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Teachers use proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process. Teachers provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations. Teachers give students feedback to improve their performance.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school.

The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Indicators Evidence: For each Indicator, click the (Add Evidence) link to provide examples of evidence that support the rubric response.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident Little or no evidence exists

Emerging Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice

Operational Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented

Highly Functional Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

INDICATORS: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

3.1 Develops and implements curriculum based on clearly defined expectations for student learning:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Formative assessments: quarterlies, etc.

Lesson plans that indicate learning objectives

Master schedule

Policy on credit requirements for program completion

Policy on grading criteria

Special program promotion, completion requirements

Staff can articulate curriculum sequencing and grouping

Staff can articulate student learning expectations

Staff meet regularly to discuss student progress and remediation

Student Handbook outlines student learning expectations

Students affirm their knowledge of what is expected of them

Syllabi or course catalogues

Textbooks are aligned to learning goals, curriculum

3.2 Promotes active involvement of students in the learning process, including opportunities for them to explore application of higher-order thinking skills and investigate new approaches to applying their learning:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Course syllabi outlining criteria for student involvement

Master schedule

Peer editing

Samples of student work

Student discussion groups

Student mentoring programs

Students affirm their involvement in their own learning

3.3 Gathers, analyzes, and uses data and research in making curricular and instructional choices:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Assessment data

Course evaluations

Grade reports

Professional development calendar and topics

Staff meet to analyze data and align instruction

Surveys

Transcripts, certificates

3.4 Designs and uses instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that are research-based and reflective of best practice:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Agendas, minutes of staff/grade level/department/program meetings

Lesson plans

Professional development calendar and topics

Professional learning opportunities focus on best practice instruction

Professional organization membership

Staff meet to share best practices

Staff meetings regularly include discussions about effective instructional design and delivery

Student display of project-based learning opportunities

Variety of instructional design and delivery strategies

3.5 Offers a curriculum that challenges each student to excel, reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Curriculum includes attention to diversity

Graduation requirements

Master schedule

Policies that reflect attention to issues of equity

Promotion, graduation criteria

Staff is knowledgeable about state and national curriculum standards

Standards-based curriculum: state and national standards

Students affirm that there are opportunities to excel

3.6 Allocates and protects instructional time to support student learning:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Instructional calendar: days, hours

Lesson plans are followed during teacher absence

Master schedule

Policies and guidelines that demonstrate that all program requirements are met

Policies demonstrate that substitute teachers are responsible for delivery instruction

Staff affirm that their instructional time is protected

There are few instructional interruptions: PA system, visitors, etc.

3.7 Provides for articulation and alignment between and among all levels of schools:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Agendas, minutes of staff meetings indicating vertical and horizontal articulation

Articulation agreements between agencies

Content-specific staff are knowledgeable about each other's course syllabus

Policies and guidelines granting dual-credit, transfer of credit

Staff are knowledgeable about student learning expectations of previous and subsequent grade levels

Transition policies

3.8 Implements interventions to help students meet expectations for student learning:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

After-school programs

Counseling programs: curriculum, schedules, staffing

Online support

Policies for student orientation, interventions, remediation

Staff affirm that there are multiple opportunities for students to get support

Students affirm that they have opportunities to explore their interests and career options

Students affirm that they have opportunities to get support for their school experience

3.9 Monitors school climate and takes appropriate steps to ensure that it is conducive to student learning:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Curriculum reflects attention to issues of school climate

Database of student behavioral incidents

Parents/community indicate that the school/district focuses on positive school/district climate

Peer intervention programs; peer counseling
Policies for student behavior, remediation, due process, appeals
Reward system for positive behavior
Staff affirm that they are involved in promoting positive school climate
Staff meetings provide time for discussions about climate
Stakeholder Compact: adult and student expectations
Stakeholder satisfaction survey data
Students affirm that they are involved in promoting positive school climate

3.10 Provides comprehensive information and media services that support the curricular and instructional programs:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Budget allocating appropriate funds for media services
Calendar and schedule of media services to students
Facilities map indicating media services location
Labor agreement that outlines media services responsibilities
Media services staff demonstrate the use media resources to support student achievement
Staff affirm the use of media services in their curriculum and instructional programs
Staffing chart demonstrating allocation of appropriate media staff
Students and staff affirm their involvement in media services program

3.11 Ensures that all students and staff members have regular and ready access to instructional technology and a comprehensive materials collection that supports the curricular and instructional program:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Budget allocating appropriate funds for technology - software, hardware, and infrastructure
Calendar and schedule of technology services to students
Facilities map indicating technology services/lab

Staff affirm that technology supports their curriculum and instructional programs

Staffing chart demonstrating allocation of appropriate technology staff

Students and staff affirm that technology is embedded within the teaching and learning process

Technology staff/services demonstrate their involvement in support of student achievement

Focus Questions:

1. How does the school ensure that the curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments are aligned and articulated across grade levels in support of the expectations for student learning?

ACA ensures that the curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments are aligned and articulated across grade levels in support of the expectations for student learning. Alignment is evaluated through departmental meetings at the secondary level focusing on closing instructional gaps. At the elementary level, this is accomplished through GLAD (Grade Levels Assessing Data) meetings. It is the responsibility of principals and grade level chairs in the elementary and department chairs in the secondary to ensure the alignment of the curriculum and to check lesson plans for implementation of a variety of instructional strategies accompanied by adequate assessments. Results are discussed and/or communicated to the respective building principals. The curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments are articulated through lesson plans posted regularly by each teacher on Edline. The alignment can be seen in course sequencing information in student handbooks and course descriptions which are posted on ACA's website.

2. In what ways does the school ensure the implementation of research-based instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that facilitate achievement for all students?

ACA ensures the implementation of research-based instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that facilitate achievement for all students. This is accomplished by cyclical (6 year cycle) review and

adoption of new textbooks, which incorporate the latest strategies, innovations, and activities. Workshop attendance is encouraged and financial support is available from the school to keep teachers up to date on the latest strategies to improve student achievement. Observations by principals, assistant principals, and department chairs are employed to make sure the strategies documented in submitted lesson plans and posted to Edline are actually implemented. Staff development training sessions have been conducted throughout the current school year. These have included motivational sessions, presentations of professional materials, webinars and small group activities.

3. What processes are implemented to ensure that teachers are well-prepared and effectively implementing the curriculum?

In order to ensure the effective implementation of the curriculum by well-prepared teachers, ACA requires Course Outlines to be kept and submitted by each teacher to department chairs and/or the principal. Lesson Plans are submitted on a weekly basis and must regularly be posted to Edline for access by parents and students. Observations by principals, assistant principals, and department chairs are used to ensure that lesson plans are implemented as submitted. Additionally, dialogue regarding the effectiveness of instruction transpires continually between faculty and appropriate supervisors and administrators. Such occurs in informal settings in faculty workrooms and school hallways as well as in more formal venues via faculty, in-service and departmental or grade level meetings.

4. How does the school provide every student access to comprehensive information, instructional technology, and media services?

Students at ACA have access to comprehensive information, instructional technology, and media services. ACA has two media facilities – a secondary library with ten internet accessible computers and an elementary library with five. Elementary students are regularly scheduled for library visits on a weekly basis, and the Accelerated Reader program is readily available to elementary students.

Secondary students schedule library use at their teachers' request. Computer labs are available on both the elementary and secondary levels. With the exception of K/4 pupils, each elementary student has laptop access at least one time per week and computers are available for center work in each elementary room. On the secondary level, the computer lab is used for keyboarding instruction in the seventh grade, Basic Computer instruction in the eighth grade, and Intermediate Computer instruction as a requirement in the ninth or tenth grade. Advanced Computer is available as an elective in grades ten through twelve. A portable keyboard lab is also available for limited use in the middle school (grades 6-8).

Other instructional technology is available for most departments through textbook resources, including online textbook access, DVD and CD resources, and listening labs. All faculty members have computers available in their classrooms for their use. Students and parents have access to comprehensive information about ACA through the school's comprehensive website, Edline, and the Eagle Vision Newsletter.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning that provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The school demonstrates evidence of alignment between the curriculum and instructional practices with systematic implementation across the school. Teachers use proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process. Teachers provide frequent opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations. Teachers give students regular feedback to improve their performance. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "operational" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

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.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly defined performance measures. The system is used to assess student performance on expectations for student learning, evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, and determine interventions to improve student performance. The assessment system yields timely and accurate information that is meaningful and useful to school leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders in understanding student performance, school effectiveness, and the results of improvement efforts.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school.

The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Indicators Evidence: For each Indicator, click the (Add Evidence) link to provide examples of evidence that support the rubric response.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident Little or no evidence exists

Emerging Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice

Operational Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented

Highly Functional Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully

integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

INDICATORS: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

4.1 Establishes performance measures for student learning that yield information that is reliable, valid, and bias free:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

All stakeholders are knowledgeable about behavioral standards

All stakeholders are knowledgeable about grading and appeals

All stakeholders are knowledgeable about learning expectations and targets for student performance

Assessment system that records multiple assessments

Assessment system that safeguards validity, confidentiality, identification

Database that records graduation, completion, GPA, placement, retention rates

Policies that outline targets for behavioral standards: attendance, discipline

Policies that outline targets for student performance and are aligned to state/national standards

Staff affirm the use of multiple measures for student performance

Staff use data to inform their practice

Student/Staff Handbook that outlines grading scales, syllabus criteria, and appeal process

4.2 Develops and implements a comprehensive assessment system for assessing progress toward meeting the expectations for student learning:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Agendas, minutes from staff meetings indicate utilization of data systems

Calendar of assessment activities

Examples of student work are prominently displayed

Online assessment system

Policies outline administration of multiple assessments and their purpose

Record of multiple assessments administered, including program-specific required assessments

Staff meet regularly to discuss student work

Staff utilize assessment data for the purpose of instructional and program planning

Stakeholders are familiar with the administration and purpose of multiple assessments

Stakeholders are knowledgeable about the assessment schedule

Students affirm knowledge about their learning expectations

4.3 Uses student assessment data for making decisions for continuous improvement of teaching and learning processes:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Agendas, minutes from staff meetings indicate use of data to drive instructional planning discussions

Criteria for feedback on performance

Staff are knowledgeable about how to use student performance data for the purpose of instructional planning

Staff demonstrate the use of data when planning instruction, through vertical and horizontal articulation

Student performance data reports, charts, graphs indicate system-wide use of data for instructional planning

4.4 Conducts a systematic analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness and uses the results to improve student performance:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Data from multiple surveys indicate wide scale use of data to analyze instructional and organizational effectiveness

Database that records graduation, post-graduate engagement

Staff utilize perception data from surveys to guide program planning

4.5 Communicates the results of student performance and school effectiveness to all stakeholders:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Agendas, minutes from meetings where student performance and school effectiveness were highlighted

Criteria that establishes student performance data as a component of parent-teacher conferences

Newsletters demonstrate communication of student performance and school effectiveness

Stakeholders affirm their familiarity with student performance and organizational effectiveness

Stakeholders affirm their involvement in meetings in which the topic of student performance and organizational effectiveness were highlighted

4.6 Uses comparison and trend data of student performance from comparable schools in evaluating its effectiveness:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Reports that outline comparable data analysis - across schools, districts, states, nationally

4.7 Demonstrates verifiable growth in student performance:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Data reports disaggregate student performance growth

Data reports include behavioral and environmental data

Data reports utilize identified growth model that is valid, reliable, and psychometrically appropriate

Staff can identify reasons why student performance has increased/decreased

Staff can identify strategies for increasing student performance

Stakeholders can speak to and support the growth data

4.8 Maintains a secure, accurate, and complete student record system in accordance with state and federal regulations:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Policies that outline the conditions for safeguarding and transferring transcripts

Policies that safeguard accuracy and security of all data

Reports that satisfy local, state, and national requirements

Staff affirm their comfort with the level of data accuracy and security

Stakeholders are knowledgeable about the conditions under which transcripts are safeguarded and transferred

Focus Questions:

1. How is the assessment system currently used in your school to analyze changes in student performance?

One of the school's SIP committees was formed specifically to analyze our students' test scores and to make plans and marshal resources in order to affect positive change and improvement. Such analysis identified recurrent weaknesses in the curriculum which are being reflected in students' Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) scores. A plan was developed to make changes in the curriculum to address the weaknesses. Deficiency reports given at the mid-point of each grading period help to monitor student progress. ACA requires all seniors to take the ACT as a part of its graduation requirements. The school's adoption of a policy five years ago requiring all students not making at least a 20 or higher on the ACT to re-take the test has proven to be effective in improving ACT test scores.

2. What are you doing to ensure that assessment results are timely, relevant, and communicated in a way that can be used by teachers, students, parents, and external stakeholders to aid the performance of individual students?

ACA has established and implemented a robust standardized program of standardized testing. Such includes the administration of the Stanford

Achievement Test (SAT) to all students in grades 2, 4, 6 and 8 and the giving of the PLAN (a pre-ACT test) to all sophomores and the PSAT (a pre-Scholastic Aptitude Test) to all juniors. PLAN and PSAT scores are discussed and explained in detail each year to sophomores and juniors respectively by the high school counselor. Additionally, ACA's Board has established policy that seniors must re-take the ACT if they do not make at least a score of 20 on their initial testing. One of ACA's School Improvement Plan committees has been working on assessing and improving our students' writing for the past five years. This program has targeted pupils in grades 5, 7, and 9 and was scored using a rubric established by members of the English department.

Edline is used for the delivery of important information and grades to parents and guardians. Teachers are required to update their Edline information weekly in the elementary school and as grades become available in the secondary school. At the secondary level, a testing calendar is posted in the faculty workroom on which teachers must list their tests three (3) days in advance of their administration, a practice which keeps our older students from having 4 or 5 tests on the same day.

3. How are data used to understand and improve overall school effectiveness?

Data from standardized test scores, teacher generated tests, homework assignments and classroom participation are employed to understand and improve the school's overall effectiveness. ACA's curriculum is adjusted and modified when data demonstrates the appearance of gaps in our instructional programs. Additionally, counselors review test data and report to teachers, administrators, and staff so that appropriate changes can be made where deemed necessary.

4. How are teachers trained to understand and use data in the classroom?

Edline and Grade Quick training and reviews are provided to all teachers at the beginning of each school year. On a regular basis, information on wide-ranging topics, from student test score results to employee age distributions, is shared with the faculty and Board members through in-service meetings and other vehicles for communication.

Additionally, one of two in-house computer technicians is available during part of each school day to teachers and administrators for purposes of trouble-shooting.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly defined performance measures that yield valid and reliable results. The system is used to assess student performance on expectations for student learning, evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, and determine interventions to improve student performance. The assessment system yields timely and accurate information that is meaningful and useful to school leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders in understanding student performance, school effectiveness, and the results of improvement efforts. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "operational" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

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.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, to meet special needs, and to comply with applicable regulations. The school employs and allocates staff that are well qualified for their assignments. The school provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff to improve their effectiveness. The school ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school.

The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Indicators Evidence: For each Indicator, click the (Add Evidence) link to provide examples of evidence that support the rubric response.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident Little or no evidence exists

Emerging Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice

Operational Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented

Highly Functional Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully

integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

INDICATORS: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

5.1 Recruits, employs, and mentors qualified professional staff that are capable of fulfilling assigned roles and responsibilities:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Personnel policies ensuring appropriate hiring practices

Personnel policies ensuring certification, licensure, evaluation, training

Professional learning opportunities

Schedules

Staff Handbook

Staff schedules and assignments

Student Handbook

5.2 Assigns professional staff responsibilities based on their qualifications (i.e., professional preparation, ability, knowledge, and experience):

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Labor agreement

Personnel policies ensuring appropriate placement

Personnel policies ensuring certification, licensure, evaluation, training

Professional learning opportunities

Staff can affirm that they are teaching in their major area of study
Staff Handbook

Staff schedules and assignments

Staffing of both administrative and teaching positions is appropriate and adequate

5.3 Ensures that all staff participate in a continuous program of professional development:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Budget demonstrates appropriate allocation for PD

Calendar, agenda, summaries of PD opportunities

Evaluation of PD data

Personnel policies that stipulate PD requirements

Professional development plan

Staff are actively engaged in discussions that have resulted from their professional development experience

Staff are aware of the requirements for continuous learning

Staff can affirm their involvement in professional learning opportunities

Staff implement effective strategies based on their professional development experience

5.4 Provides and assigns staff that are sufficient in number to meet the vision and purpose of the school:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Budget demonstrates appropriate allocation for staffing

Class size indicates appropriate and effective support of student learning

Master schedule

Personnel policies and practices

5.5 Budgets sufficient resources to support its educational programs and to implement its plans for improvement:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Annual budget

Facilities plan

Facilities protection documentation: insurance, amortization
Fiscal policies: use of all funding, including donations, reserves, discretionary
Infrastructure plans: short and long range
Practices that support appropriate use of allocated funds
School-level budgets
Space is adequate and appropriate to support student learning

5.6 Monitors all financial transactions through a recognized, regularly audited accounting system:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Audit reports

Fiscal protection plans: insurance

Organizational oversight of fiscal authority

Payroll and purchasing policies and processes

Practices that support appropriate use of fiscal resources

Refund policies

Secure management of all fiscal processes

5.7 Maintains the site, facilities, services, and equipment to provide an environment that is safe and orderly for all occupants:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

All facilities on school/district property are maintained

Calendar of safety drills: fire, tornado, emergency crisis

Curriculum indicates attention to cleanliness and safety

Facilities maintenance reports and plans

HAZMAT (hazardous materials): policies and training

Policies and processes regarding safety

Policies and processes related to student/staff injury

Policies regarding dispensing prescription medications

School/District environment is clean and safe

Staff are involved in developing and implementing safety policies

Stakeholder survey data supporting safety

State and Federal regulations regarding special program safety requirements

Support staff are knowledgeable about safety policies

5.8 Possesses a written security and crisis management plan with appropriate training for stakeholders:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Crisis intervention plan

Emergency procedures

Health support staff are available

Secure record system

Staff and students are knowledgeable about emergency procedures

Staff Handbook

Student Handbook

Wellness policy

5.9 Ensures that each student has access to guidance services that include, but are not limited to, counseling, appraisal, mentoring, staff consulting, referral, and educational and career planning:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Curriculum for Career Preparation

Enrollment data

Guidance and Counseling Department

Professional development: calendar, topics

Staff affirm that they receive regular training opportunities to support student behavior

Staff are knowledgeable in all aspects of appropriate social/emotional support for student learning behavior

Staffing of Counseling and Guidance programs

Student referral policies and practices

Students are knowledgeable about career planning programs

5.10 Provides appropriate support for students with special needs:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Classroom instruction demonstrates variety of instructional methodologies to support all students

Policies and procedures that are ADA and IDEA compliant

Student referral process and procedures

Focus Questions:

1. What is the process for recruitment, induction, placement, development, evaluation, and retention of qualified teachers, administrators, and support staff?

The administration at Alabama Christian Academy recruits qualified teachers, administrators, and staff in several ways. They attend job fairs and look for postings on the National Christian School website. The administration also posts openings on our school website and sends local church email notices. They also meet potential employees by attending administrative conferences. Alabama Christian Academy follows a process when inducting new teachers. Prior to the start of each school year, new teachers report for a special in-service program designed specifically for their training. New teachers are continually advised by Department Heads and, in addition, are given a mentor at the beginning of the school year to help with day to day questions.

Job placement at ACA is based on educational background, certification, level of degree, an interview process, and years of experience.

There are several ways in which ACA helps in staff development.

Teachers attend required in-service meetings which are held on a periodic basis throughout the year. During the current year, ACA also started monthly staff development sessions. Teachers are also encouraged to attend off campus workshops paid for by funds ACA sets aside to assist teachers with their expenses. The mentoring program also helps new teachers with their staff development. All of our administration and staff have some form of evaluation. Our President is evaluated by the Board of Trustees. Our superintendent and principals are evaluated by the President. The high school principal evaluates his

assistant principals. Teachers are evaluated by their principals and department heads. Classroom observations and walk-throughs are a part of the evaluation process. At least one formal evaluation is conducted every year.

ACA has implemented policies to help retain good administrators, teachers, and staff. Children of ACA employees receive a discount. Full tuition is available if the teacher has taught at ACA for at least 20 years. ACA also offers attractive insurance and retirement benefits. The school pays 100% of the teacher's individual insurance. For participating employees, ACA contributes 5% to retirement. Teachers are rewarded with extra personal days after 15 years of service. Those who retire, having taught more than 10 years, receive payment for unused sick leave up to sixty days.

2. How does the leadership ensure that the allocation of financial resources is supportive of the school's vision, educational programs, and its plans for school improvement?

ACA's Board of Trustees has established a Finance Committee that meets with the school's President on an as needed basis. The President develops an annual budget and provides it to the Finance Committee. The budget is then presented to the entire Board for final approval. Department heads make decisions on the best way to use resources within their departments and must present an annual budget to the President. The Business Office manages purchases via a purchase order system and pays bills to assure that all income and expenditures are accounted for. Recently, ACA employed financial consultants to evaluate the school's needs and to offer advice concerning expenditures and fundraisers. Finally, each year, the school employs an outside CPA firm to conduct an external financial compilation and/or audit.

3. How does the leadership ensure a safe and orderly environment for students and staff?

ACA has created a safer environment for students and staff by installing cameras around the school in conjunction with a new access/security and alarm system. A protective fence has been added in front of the elementary school and Multi-purpose Room. Doors entering the school are kept locked during the day, and visitors cannot enter the

school building without being admitted by appropriate school personnel. Fire and tornado drills are conducted on a regular basis and records of such are kept on file in the superintendent's office. Fire extinguishers and alarms systems are inspected by an independent safety firm on an annual basis. ACA has also required school decals to be placed on the vehicles of all students and employees. Students must use hall passes when leaving classrooms. Additionally, personnel continually observe and survey ACA's buildings and grounds and ask strangers how they can be helped. Finally, ACA's nurse organized and conducted vision and scoliosis screening programs for pupils in designated grade levels, and has plans to extend such to hearing screening in the very near future. During the winter months, she also arranged for teachers to have regular flu shots and for both students and employees to receive H1N1 flu shots. Three automated, external defibrillators (AED) are located in key areas of the school and trained employees are available to use them should the need ever.

4. What process is used to ensure and monitor that each student has access to guidance and resource services that meet the needs of the student?

Both elementary and secondary schools have guidance counselors available to assist students with academic and personal counseling. Additionally, a guidance professional has been hired just to help seniors with their needs as they make career decisions and seek to enroll in college. ACA has also employed a Spiritual Life Director, who assists with spiritual counseling. In 2007, ACA employed a full-time school nurse for the first time. This individual provides on-site emergency first aid care, secures and dispenses all medications to students, sets up various screening programs, consults with parents and physicians, and maintains and monitors student health data, among other duties.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school has human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, to meet special needs, and to comply with applicable

regulations. The school employs and allocates staff members who are well qualified for their assignments. The school provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff to improve their effectiveness, including both professional and support staff. The school ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "operational" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

STANDARD: The school fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it has the understanding, commitment, and support of stakeholders. School personnel seek opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership among stakeholders to help students learn and advance improvement efforts.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Indicators Evidence: For each Indicator, click the (Add Evidence) link to provide examples of evidence that support the rubric response.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident Little or no evidence exists

Emerging Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice

Operational Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented

Highly Functional Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

INDICATORS: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

6.1 Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Agendas, minutes, calendar of parent meetings

Calendar of events that promote stakeholder involvement

Internship/partnership agreements with community-based business and agencies

Parents and community members regularly volunteer time in school/district

Policies regarding credit for service learning

Policies regarding suggestions, grievances

Staff affirm that stakeholders are involved in many aspects of school/district

Stakeholder survey data

Stakeholders affirm that they are involved in many aspects of school/district

6.2 Has formal channels to listen to and communicate with stakeholders:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Calendars, agendas, minutes of parent meetings

Emails, phone answering system

Newsletters, brochures, letters, memos

Parent - Teacher conferences schedule

Policies regarding formal inclusion of stakeholder involvement

School Improvement Committee: agendas, minutes, membership

Stakeholders affirm they have variety of opportunities to be formally involved in life of school/district

Steering Committee meetings: agendas, minutes, membership

Web page dedicated to parents/community members

Wide variety of stakeholder communication documents/avenues

6.3 Solicits the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance the work of the school:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Advisory Committee

Calendar, agendas, minutes, committee membership

Policies regarding volunteer involvement

Schedule of volunteer activities

Staff affirm that they regularly include community in preparing instructional delivery activities

Stakeholder survey data

Stakeholders affirm that their suggestions and recommendations are acted upon

Stakeholders affirm that they are actively involved in providing expertise

6.4 Communicates the expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to all stakeholders:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Brochures, pamphlets

Newsletters about student performance

Online calendar, schedule, and news/updates

Parent -teacher conferences

Parent Handbook

Parents and students are involved in making course selections

Regularly published newsletters to community

Stakeholders affirm that they are knowledgeable about student learning

Student Handbook

6.5 Provides information about students, their performance, and school effectiveness that is meaningful and useful to stakeholders:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Policies regarding reporting schedule

Report cards

Focus Questions:

1. How does the school's leadership ensure that the school is responsive to community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction?

The school's leadership ensures that the school is responsive to community expectations through policies implemented by the Board of Trustees, speeches, directives, and policy and procedure reviews presented at teacher in-service meetings. ACA's personnel handbook, the employment of a yearly theme, and staff development opportunities also ensure the school is responsive to its community and stakeholders. Stakeholder feedback is given on a regular basis by the President's Council, a group of selected parents who serve as an advisory group for the school's chief administrator. Additionally, during the course of the current school year, the parents of all new students were surveyed, as were the members of the Classes of 2002 and 2007. Summaries of these surveys were shared with the faculty, posted on workroom bulletin boards and included in "School Profile" notebook maintained in both elementary and secondary work areas. In March 2010, students in grades 3 through 12, parents, teachers, staff, administrators and community stakeholders were surveyed using the NSSE surveys. Results of these surveys will be used to give direction to future school improvement efforts within the bounds of ACA's stated mission and financial resources.

2. How does the school's leadership foster a learning community?

ACA's leadership uses many avenues to foster a learning community through the use of organizations such as Volunteers in Partnership (VIPs), the President's Council, school-wide committees, surveys, volunteers and businesses within our community. Chapel services are held for, and sometimes conducted by, the students themselves. ACA's guidance office offers the program, "Making It Count". This is a no cost educational service provided for students and parents, and designed to help pupils, beginning in the ninth grade, to chart their courses for successful high school careers and to take the steps necessary to begin

their college careers. The three presentations are offered to the following:

9th Grade – “Making High School Count” is designed to help high school freshman understand the importance of high school providing them with important information on how to recognize their potential for future success and how to make the most of their high school experience while addressing transitional issues such as time management and study skills.

11th Grade – “Making Your College Search Count” provides a practical, current look at college selection and application.

12th Grade – “Making College and Career Count” provides a practical, current look at how to succeed after high school.

Additionally, ACA has established a viable job-shadowing program for its seniors, and offers opportunities for qualifying high school students to participate in Model United Nations, Scholars’ Bowl, and National Honor Society activities and functions.

3. What avenues are used to communicate information to stakeholders about students, their performance, and school effectiveness?

Avenues used to communicate information to stakeholders are as follows:

- Email
- Edline
- Newsletter
- Website
- Written publications
- Board meetings
- President’s Council
- Parent surveys
- Parent/Teacher conferences
- School Cast (Purchased and activated in Mar. 2010.)

Overall Assessment:

Highly Functional: The school has the understanding, commitment, and support of all stakeholders. School personnel actively promote and provide regular, systematic opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership among all stakeholders to help students learn and advance improvement efforts and can demonstrate a high level of meaningful participation by most shareholder groups. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "highly functional" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns the functions of the school with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained and the school demonstrates progress in improving student performance and school effectiveness. New improvement efforts are informed by the results of earlier efforts through reflection and assessment of the improvement process.

Indicators Rubric: Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school.

The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

Indicators Evidence: For each Indicator, click the (Add Evidence) link to provide examples of evidence that support the rubric response.

Definitions of Indicators Rubric:

Not Evident Little or no evidence exists

Emerging Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice

Operational Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented

Highly Functional Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

INDICATORS: In fulfillment of this standard, the school:

7.1 Engages in a continuous process of improvement 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):

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Continuous/School/District Improvement Plan

Information/Data system

Professional Development Plan: agenda, topics

Record of student performance improvement efforts

Specific program initiative to support continuous improvement

Staff affirm their involvement in a specific program that supports continuous improvement

Staff affirm their involvement in continuous improvement committees

7.2 Engages stakeholders in the processes of continuous improvement:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Calendar, agendas, minutes, sign-in sheets demonstrating stakeholder involvement in school improvement

Parent compact

School Improvement plan indicating membership of committees

Stakeholder survey data demonstrating stakeholder involvement in school improvement

Stakeholders affirm their involvement in continuous improvement process

7.3 Ensures that plans for continuous improvement are aligned with the vision and purpose of the school and expectations for student learning:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Calendar, agendas, minutes of school improvement meetings

Data: student performance, stakeholder opinion are used in development of school improvement plan

Evaluation data demonstrating impact of plan and actions taken to remediate

School improvement plan demonstrates alignment with vision, purpose

Staff affirm their understanding of the impact of programs that support student learning

Staff demonstrate capacity for changing methodologies to increase student performance

Staff, students affirm their understanding of student performance targets

Student performance targets are communicated to all stakeholders

Vision, purpose posted in school/district facility

7.4 Provides professional development for school personnel to help them implement improvement

interventions to achieve improvement goals:

Operational

Evidence Provided:

Continuous/School/District Improvement Plan

Personnel Policies that outline staff evaluation process

Professional Development Plan: agenda, topics

Staff affirm their involvement in professional learning

7.5 Monitors and communicates the results of improvement efforts to stakeholders:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Annual Report

Information/Data system

Newsletters, brochures

Parent-Teacher conferences

Staffing assignments support monitoring and reporting of continuous improvement efforts

7.6 Evaluates and documents the effectiveness and impact of its continuous process of improvement:

Highly Functional

Evidence Provided:

Graduation and retention rates

Information/Data system

Postsecondary engagement: employment, college

Staff meetings regularly use data to inform their discussions and decisions

Stakeholder survey (satisfaction) data

Focus Questions:

1. What is the process for continuous improvement used by the school and what are the results that this process is delivering for student performance and school effectiveness?

The school utilizes methods and practices which include, but are not limited to, parent and student surveys, involvement in various committees, test scores, parental input, comparisons with other schools, President's Council and Parent Leadership Team. As a result of findings gathered from these methods and practices, the school has implemented further data gathering, instituted additional classes, improved ACT scores, increased stakeholder involvement, and extended appropriate remediation.

2. What steps are taken to ensure that the improvement goals reflect student learning needs that are aligned with the vision and purpose of the school?

Steps being taken to ensure that improvement goals reflect student learning needs that are aligned with the school's vision and purpose are planned and implemented by ACA's various SACS committees, especially our School Improvement Plan committees and the Vision committee. Memos and emails to faculty members are used to convey concerns about specific areas of weakness which need to be addressed. Follow-up inspection of lesson plans is a key method for insuring that any weaknesses are not just addressed, but remediated. Additionally, the school's college and career planning coordinator instituted a job shadowing program for seniors during the 2008-09 school year. This one-day career shadowing has been continued during the current year. It allows participants to experience the actual world of work in which they have expressed interest.

3. What process is used to ensure that the school personnel are provided professional development and technical assistance to implement interventions and achieve improvement goals?

One key method by which school personnel are provided professional development and technical assistance is through the school's provision of funds for content-specific staff development, post-graduate work and college textbooks. The addition of another computer/technology specialist to the faculty at the beginning of this school year has allowed more individual and one-on-one assistance for our teachers in the constantly growing field of educational technology. A concerted fundraising effort has been in place for several years now to improve staff development training in technology as well as to upgrade the quality and scope of the school's technology platforms and systems. The establishment of the Habitudes program in August 2009 has invigorated the faculty and given them attitudinal, leadership and service components to complement the cognitive and intellectual dimensions of our long-standing professional development program designed around ACA's school improvement committees.

4. How does the leadership ensure that the improvement plan is implemented, monitored, achieved, and communicated to stakeholders?

The school administration evaluates and observes classroom instruction. Various school personnel and committees monitor grades and ACT scores, and other test data collected to insure that plans are achieving desired goals. ACA's leadership budgets to make needed additions to school's curriculum, facilities and technology. All pertinent information is conveyed online for stakeholders to view at their discretion, as well as through newsletters, various mail-outs and parent meetings.

Additionally, it should be noted that ACA's Leadership Team that has planned and implemented the Habitudes program is composed of students, parents and Board members and not just teachers and administrators.

Overall Assessment:

Operational: The school implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns most functions of the school with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained and the school demonstrates progress in improving student performance and school effectiveness. New improvement efforts are informed by the results of earlier efforts through reflection and assessment of the improvement process. The preponderance of the evidence supports an overall assessment of "operational" and is substantiated in the responses to the Indicators Rubric.

Conclusion

The following focus questions reflect the school's overall analysis of its internal evaluation of the accreditation standards.

Focus Questions

As you review your responses to the standards, what major trends, themes, or areas of focus emerge that cut across the seven standards?

As a result of our review of responses to the standards, several themes or areas of focus emerge for our school that cut across the seven standards. Most apparent is our need to extend and expand our use of data in all aspects of school planning and decision-making. Coupled with this realization is the need for still further improvement in the area of communication with our stakeholders, and our parents in particular. While we have vastly expanded our methods of communication over the years to include email, Edline, School Cast, and website news items, it is still difficult to get many parents to attend to and/or be responsive to such communication.

Based on your review of these cross-cutting themes/trends and each of the seven standards, what would you consider to be your school's greatest strengths?

Surveys over the years have shown the characteristics listed below to be ACA's greatest strengths:

1. The provision of a Christian, caring, loving, supportive, family, learning environment/atmosphere is always at the top of most every list.
2. Having a helpful, knowledgeable, committed, compassionate, good, caring, capable, dedicated, loving, concerned, highly qualified/experienced/talented/trained faculty is a definite strength.
3. The provision of a Christ-centered education including the teaching of Christian values and scriptural truths coupled with opportunities to put them into practice via worship, service, and leadership is one of ACA's strongest points.
4. The support and guidance of a good, dedicated, committed administration and leadership team is a strong characteristic of our school.
5. Co-worker relationships, rapport, support and teamwork are frequently cited as fundamental strengths of our school.
6. ACA's teaching and ministering to the whole child through its academic, extra-curricular and spiritually-based programs is also a great

strength. Also, over time, ACA has developed a culture of improvement. It is the sincere desire of the school's faculty, staff, administration, stakeholders, and Board to glorify God by striving for excellence in all that is done at the Academy. The following list of various facility improvements, curricular and extra-curricular additions, and program and organizational changes is offered as a one illustration of this determined mindset:

Summer 2005

- Renovations to the gym including the installation of A/C were completed.

Fall 2005

- A full-time elementary guidance counselor was employed and a first-class elementary guidance program developed.
- A Scholars' Bowl Team was established at the high school level.
- AP Calculus was added to the curriculum.

Fall 2006

- A student leadership training group called SALT (Student Action Leadership Team) was first organized and trained.
- AP Biology was added to the curriculum.

Fall 2007

- A Coffee Shoppe was opened as a social gathering spot for high school students.
- AP European History was added to the curriculum.
- LIGHT (a leadership group of selected 9th and 10th graders) was initially formed and trained.
- A new and improved software program for our student database and grade reporting was purchased. It was acquired from Hunter Systems and included: Grade Quick, School Minder and Edline.
- A special service group of 5th graders was formed into the Elite Eagles for the first time.
- The exercise equipment in the school's weight room was updated and upgraded.

- An additional secondary school level guidance professional was employed to assist seniors with applying to college and obtaining scholarships dollars.
- A full-time Assistant Principal was hired for the Middle School.
- A full-time School Nurse was employed to establish screening programs, dispense prescribed and OTC medications, and provide first aid and consultation related to student health issues.

Summer 2007

- A full-time Strength Coach was hired to work with our other coaches and our student athletes.

Summer 2008

- A major facility expansion and renovation was completed. Such expanded our floor space by 51,000 square feet and cost 1.9 million dollars. It included: a separate elementary library, a Board Room, a Chorus Room, a secondary Science Lab, 3 secondary classrooms, an extra secondary faculty workroom, restroom and conference room, extra storage space adjoining the Multi-Purpose Room (MPR), and extensive renovation of the football stadium.
- A full-time Spiritual Life Director was employed. His duties include, but are not limited to, the organizing of chapel, the implementation of Spiritual Emphasis Days, and the spiritual counseling of students.

Fall 2008

- A chapter of the National Elementary Honor Society (NEHS) was established.
- After-school help sessions were initiated on Wednesdays at the secondary level.
- A Job Shadowing Program in order to assist seniors in career selection and choice was instituted.

Summer 2009

- All employee computers were upgraded and local servers installed on campus in order to permit the remote activation and use of school computers from home by teachers, staff, and the administration.
- Walk-way covers and several large awnings were installed around the school.

Fall 2009

- A chorus of 5th graders was established as a group of ambassadors for the school.
- A controlled access/security system was installed to ensure the safety of our students and employees.
- Thirty new computers were purchased for use in the elementary school.
- All new lockers were purchased and installed in the varsity football locker room.
- A Model United Nations Team was formed and competed for the first time.
- The Habitudes program was instituted as a part of our school's ongoing process of professional development and training.

Spring 2010

- School Cast was purchased and tested as an additional means of communicating with parents and stakeholders.

Additional items that have occurred from Summer 2005 through Fall 2009:

- Two additional buses have been purchased for school field trips.
- The following new sports teams have been added to extra-curricular offerings: JV soccer, softball and baseball, golf for girls, and JV track for girls and boys.
- Numerous Red Cross Blood Drives sponsored by ACA's National Honor Society (NHS). These demonstrate in a concrete fashion our school's desire to serve our community. Such has grown to be the largest of any school, public or private, in the tri-county area.

What would you consider to be your school's greatest challenges?

Due to our nation's recent economic struggles, maintaining our school's enrollment has suddenly become one of ACA's greatest challenges. This is especially true in the elementary grades. Continuing to provide an excellent, comprehensive, well-rounded education to all students in the face of uncertain economic times will challenge all private/independent schools for the foreseeable future. Prior to the current school year, ACA

had experienced virtually decades of unbroken growth in its enrollment. Review and re-assessment of all aspects of the school's operation will need to be conducted over the next few months. In addition to this new challenge, several others have been around for a while:

1. Due to the burgeoning growth of the past, we have encountered space and facility limitations. Traffic and parking have become perennial difficulties. The need for another gym or cafeteria is evident as is that for an auditorium or formal assembly hall. The lack of space on the school's current campus, coupled with our nation's economic woes precludes this situation being remedied in the near future.
2. Strengthening and expanding our academic offerings is also a challenge, not only in light of the first challenge mentioned, but in that of our nation's current cultural changes. It is becoming more difficult to maintain the attention and focus of youngsters in a fast-paced, hectic, modern world filled with so many outside distractions.
3. A corollary of the previous challenge is our school's struggle to minister to and provide for the emotional and spiritual needs of our students in view of our nation's social ills. More and more children are coming to our school from broken homes with broken lives. Trying to teach students academically when they are dealing with divorce, death, illness, family economic problems, family squabbles and absentee parents is indeed an incredible challenge to our faculty, staff and administrators.

How will you use the insights gained from this self-assessment to inform and enhance your quality assurance and continuous improvement efforts?

It is critical that the insights gained from this self-assessment be used to inform and enhance ACA's quality assurance and continuous improvement efforts. More faculty and staff meeting time will need to be committed in the future to the analysis of data, the delineation of more targeted plans and programs to meet specified challenges, and the communication of both to a wider range of stakeholders. More efficacious use of our website for transmitting information to our stakeholders needs to be found. Just as importantly, is the training of

stakeholders to look to the ACA website as a first-point of contact for all kinds of data and information.

Standards Assessment Report Summary

Standards & Indicators Not Evident Emerging Operational Highly Functional

1. Vision and Purpose

1.1 Establishes a vision for the school in collaboration with its stakeholders

1.2 Communicates the vision and purpose to build stakeholder understanding and support

1.3 Identifies goals to advance the vision

1.4 Develops and continuously maintains a profile of the school, its students, and the community

1.5 Ensures that the school's vision and purpose guide the teaching and learning process

1.6 Reviews its vision and purpose systematically and revises them when appropriate

2. Governance and Leadership

2.1 Establishes policies and procedures that provide for the effective operation of the school

2.2 Recognizes and preserves the executive, administrative, and leadership prerogatives of the administrative head of the school

2.3 Ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations

2.4 Employs a system that provides for analysis and review of student performance and school effectiveness

2.5 Fosters a learning community

2.6 Provides teachers and students opportunities to lead

2.7 Provides stakeholders meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership

2.8 Controls curricular and extracurricular activities that are sponsored by the school

2.9 Responds to community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction

2.10 Implements an evaluation system that provides for the professional growth of all personnel

3. Teaching and Learning

3.1 Develops and implements curriculum based on clearly defined expectations for student learning

3.2 Promotes active involvement of students in the learning process, including opportunities for them to explore application of higher-order thinking skills and investigate new approaches to applying their learning

3.3 Gathers, analyzes, and uses data and research in making curricular and instructional choices

3.4 Designs and uses instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that are research-based and reflective of best practice

3.5 Offers a curriculum that challenges each student to excel, reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity

3.6 Allocates and protects instructional time to support student learning

3.7 Provides for articulation and alignment between and among all levels of schools

3.8 Implements interventions to help students meet expectations for student learning

3.9 Monitors school climate and takes appropriate steps to ensure that it is conducive to student learning

3.10 Provides comprehensive information and media services that support the curricular and instructional programs

3.11 Ensures that all students and staff members have regular and ready access to instructional technology and a comprehensive materials collection that supports the curricular and instructional program

4. Documenting and Using Results

4.1 Establishes performance measures for student learning that yield information that is reliable, valid, and bias free

4.2 Develops and implements a comprehensive assessment system for assessing progress toward meeting the expectations for student learning

4.3 Uses student assessment data for making decisions for continuous improvement of teaching and learning processes

4.4 Conducts a systematic analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness and uses the results to improve student performance

4.5 Communicates the results of student performance and school effectiveness to all stakeholders

4.6 Uses comparison and trend data of student performance from comparable schools in evaluating its effectiveness

4.7 Demonstrates verifiable growth in student performance

4.8 Maintains a secure, accurate, and complete student record system in accordance with state and federal regulations

5. Resource and Support Systems

5.1 Recruits, employs, and mentors qualified professional staff that are capable of fulfilling assigned roles and responsibilities

5.2 Assigns professional staff responsibilities based on their qualifications (i.e., professional preparation, ability, knowledge, and experience)

5.3 Ensures that all staff participate in a continuous program of professional development

5.4 Provides and assigns staff that are sufficient in number to meet the vision and purpose of the school

5.5 Budgets sufficient resources to support its educational programs and to implement its plans for improvement

5.6 Monitors all financial transactions through a recognized, regularly audited accounting system

5.7 Maintains the site, facilities, services, and equipment to provide an environment that is safe and orderly for all occupants

5.8 Possesses a written security and crisis management plan with appropriate training for stakeholders

5.9 Ensures that each student has access to guidance services that include, but are not limited to, counseling, appraisal, mentoring, staff consulting, referral, and educational and career planning

5.10 Provides appropriate support for students with special needs

6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

6.1 Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning

6.2 Has formal channels to listen to and communicate with stakeholders

6.3 Solicits the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance the work of the school

6.4 Communicates the expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to all stakeholders

6.5 Provides information about students, their performance, and school effectiveness that is meaningful and useful to stakeholders

7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

7.1 Engages in a continuous process of improvement 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)

7.2 Engages stakeholders in the processes of continuous improvement

7.3 Ensures that plans for continuous improvement are aligned with the vision and purpose of the school and expectations for student learning

7.4 Provides professional development for school personnel to help them implement improvement interventions to achieve improvement goals

7.5 Monitors and communicates the results of improvement efforts to stakeholders

7.6 Evaluates and documents the effectiveness and impact of its continuous process of improvement