

**Report of the
Quality Assurance Review Team
for
The American School Foundation of Guadalajara, A.C.
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Review Dates: 03/25/2012 - 03/29/2012



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.

Quality Assurance Review Report

Contents

About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI	3
Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review	4
Summary of Findings	5
Commendations	5
Required Actions	8
Next Steps	8
Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools	10
Standard 1: Vision and Purpose	10
Standard 2: Governance and Leadership	11
Standard 3: Teaching and Learning	12
Standard 4: Documenting and Using Results	14
Standard 5: Resource and Support Systems	15
Standard 6: Stakeholder Communications and Relationships	16
Standard 7: Commitment to Continuous Improvement	17
Conclusion	19
Appendix	20
Quality Assurance Review Team Members	20
AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools	20

About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

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

In April 2006, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) came together to form one strong unified organization dedicated to education quality. That unified organization, known as AdvancED, creates the world's largest education community, representing 27,000 public and private schools and districts across the United States and in 65 countries worldwide and educating 15 million students.

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

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

1) Meet the AdvancED Standards and Policies for Quality Schools. Schools demonstrate adherence to the AdvancED standards and policies which describe the quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for schools to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness.

2) Engage in continuous improvement. Schools implement a continuous improvement process that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing (vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community (profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (results).

3) Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review. Schools engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, schools host an external Quality Assurance Review Team once every five years. The team evaluates the school's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and required actions to help the school improve. The team provides an oral exit report to the school and a written report detailing the team's required actions. The school acts on the team's required actions and submits a progress report following the review.

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

Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

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

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

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

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

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

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

Using the Report - Responding to the Required Actions. The school uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The school is held accountable for addressing the required actions identified in the report. The NCA CASI/SACS CASI State Office is available to assist schools in addressing the required actions. At prescribed intervals, the school must submit a progress report detailing the actions and progress the school has made on the team's required actions. The report is reviewed at the state and national level to ensure the school is addressing the required actions.

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

Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the SACS CASI International (SACS-CASI-INTL), a division of AdvancED, visited the The American School Foundation of Guadalajara, A.C. in Guadalajara, Mexico on 03/25/2012 - 03/29/2012.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 7 members of the administrative team, 25 students, 15 parents, and 7 teachers. In addition, Standards Committees including Teachers, Board and Support Staff were interviewed. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the school. Specifically, the team examined the school's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

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

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

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

Commendations

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

Commendation 1

Commendation Statement:

The highly trusting and respectful relationship between the governance body and the director general models expectations for inter-stakeholder relationships and fosters a collaborative atmosphere.

Evidence:

Members of the board and the general director independently shared during interviews the existence of this mutual high level of trust and respect. Other stakeholders also confirmed this highly functional relationship is evident.

Rationale:

Highly functional board - school head relationships provide stable leadership and create the organizational conditions to facilitate school improvement and effectiveness.

Commendation 2

Commendation Statement:

The high level of collaboration between all stakeholder groups fosters a school climate which promotes stakeholder accountability for student achievement and school effectiveness.

Evidence:

Interviews with representatives from all stakeholder groups validated collaboration has been a highly valued and critical element resulting in student success and institutional excellence.

Rationale:

A collaborative school climate fosters a feeling of pride and ownership in the school and focuses all stakeholders on the ultimate goal of student success.

Commendation 3

Commendation Statement:

The school has a well-established culture of data analysis and there is commitment at all levels to data-based decision making.

Evidence:

A great deal of data is gathered to measure student progress towards learning goals. The director of academic support, principals, department heads and team leaders support teachers by disaggregating data and presenting it in a user friendly format to staff. The minutes of meetings indicate that significant, meaningful discussions take place and that goals are set based on data analysis.

Rationale:

Effective schools use data extensively to guide them in decision making, setting and prioritizing goals, and monitoring progress.

Commendation 4

Commendation Statement:

Effective multi-directional communication throughout the school fosters a high level of stakeholder participation and satisfaction.

Evidence:

All stakeholders indicate that their perceptions are welcomed and that the open door policy of the school is genuine and sincere. Student achievement and progress on school improvement initiatives are reported on a regular basis and shared at all levels through media ranging from classroom displays to quality publications.

Rationale:

Quality communication is essential to promoting stakeholder participation and satisfaction.

Commendation 5

Commendation Statement:

The recently implemented one-to-one laptop program has significantly improved student engagement in the learning process and has increased student access to an unlimited amount of information through web access.

Evidence:

The QAR team observed the one-to-one laptop program in grades 7-9 during the visit. The same program will be adopted for students in grades 10-12 for the 2012/13 school year.

Rationale:

Activities and programs which increase student engagement in the learning process will result in higher student achievement.

Commendation 6

Commendation Statement:

Faculty, staff and leadership create a learning environment that fosters a high level of student engagement in the learning process.

Evidence:

Use of multiple instructional strategies such as, project-based and experiential learning and the integration of technology into the curriculum, motivate and excite students. Interviews and classroom observations confirmed teachers' use of various instructional strategies that encourages students to participate actively in their learning process. Students indicate their comfort in confiding in teachers and gaining additional assistance whenever needed.

Rationale:

Research indicates the significant impact that an engaging learning environment has on student motivation and achievement.

Commendation 7

Commendation Statement:

Vision and perseverance exhibited by the board and director general resulted in the purchase of land to meet future needs of the school.

Evidence:

A multi-year search for land, which required a significant time commitment as well as unlimited perseverance on behalf of the board and the director general, produced results with the acquisition of land suitable for facility expansion.

Rationale:

Visionary board and school leadership who focus on the learning environment for students make quality decisions to ensure the future needs of the students are met. In this case, the purchase of property for new school

construction was the result.

Required Actions

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

Required Action 1

Required Action:

Develop and implement a school-wide assessment policy with guidelines for teachers and essential agreements on assessment practices.

Evidence:

The QAR team found no evidence of a school-wide assessment policy.

Rationale:

A clearly articulated school wide assessment policy provides clear direction for professional staff and promotes best practice at all levels.

Required Action 2

Required Action:

Develop and implement a plan to ensure all staff members, including office support and maintenance, have regular job-specific professional development training.

Evidence:

During interviews stakeholders shared professional development opportunities for non-teaching staff was very limited.

Rationale:

Regular job-specific training for all personnel is critical if the school expects to operate at optimal effectiveness.

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

Next Steps

The school should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all stakeholders.
2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the commendations section to

- maximize their impact on the school.
3. Develop action plans to address the required actions made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the required actions.
 4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the school's efforts to improve student performance and school effectiveness.
 5. Following the Quality Assurance Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the required actions. The report will be reviewed at the state and national level to ensure that significant progress is being made toward the required actions. Lack of progress can result in a change in accreditation status.
 6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the visit, the Quality Assurance Review Team submits an accreditation recommendation to AdvancED for state review and for action at the national level by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the school. Upon receiving its accreditation, the school should celebrate its achievement with the school community. The SACS-CASI-INTL accreditation seals are available at www.advanc-ed.org/communicationskit for accredited schools and districts to post on their website and to use in school communications. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and lapel pins are also available and can be ordered from the website to help you share your accomplishment with your community.

Summary

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

Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

The primary requirement for accreditation is that the The American School Foundation of Guadalajara, A.C. demonstrates that it meets the seven standards for accreditation. The findings of the Quality Assurance Review Team regarding the standards for accreditation are summarized on the following pages.

Standard 1: Vision and Purpose

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

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

The American School Foundation of Guadalajara (ASFG), which recently celebrated its centennial, has a documented systematic process to review the vision and mission that includes all stakeholders; however, in 2006 only school improvement team members and the board were involved in crafting the vision statement. Stakeholder opinion survey data inform vision and mission review. The QAR team did note the school's vision statement "To be a leading educational institution" is not aligned with the highly inspirational school climate nor with the high expectations for student achievement. The school's vision, mission, and learning goals are displayed in every classroom and in other common areas of the school and guide the teaching and learning process. The clearly articulated student learning goals, which are reviewed annually, operationalize the school's vision and mission. The school communicates the vision and purpose to build stakeholder support by including them in the parent/student handbook, on the school's website, and by virtue of the various opportunities parents, students, and teachers have to lead. The annual report, the high school profile, and the well-designed welcome marketing/brochure provide stakeholders with a comprehensive and rich description of student performance, organizational effectiveness, programs and activities, as well as current descriptions of the students and the community.

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

- The vision, mission, and clearly articulated learning goals guide instruction and school improvement initiatives.
- Climate survey results are evaluated and are used to inform learning goal development as well as school improvement planning.

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

- As stakeholders review the school vision consider crafting a statement that inspires and motivates all stakeholders to achieve the highest level of excellence.
- Ensure all stakeholder groups are represented in the review of the school's vision, mission, and learning goals.

Finding: The American School Foundation of Guadalajara, A.C. has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 2: Governance and Leadership

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

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

The school governance body consists of nineteen members, many of whom are school alumni and many of whom are long serving members of the board. ASFG also has a thirteen-member foundation board whose primary responsibility is to ensure the school has sufficient funding to maintain quality staff, facilities, and other resources. The following committees support the board's efforts and are formed to discuss relevant matters in more detail and then report their findings to the board for final decision making: governance, finance, buildings and grounds, purchasing, and planning. Board and board committee meetings are scheduled on a monthly basis. Legal counsel is represented on the board and provides the expertise and guidance to ensure the school is in compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations.

The director general, who has served in this capacity for eleven years and is an ex officio member of the board, has provided exemplary leadership during her tenure as evidenced by board member and other stakeholder comments during interviews with the QAR team. Other members of the school's leadership team include the four division principals, the Mexican program director, and the director of instruction, all of whom have held leadership positions at the school for at least eight years. The collaborative leadership style by the entire leadership team, their open door policy, and the multiple participatory leadership opportunities afforded to stakeholders facilitate a school climate in which all stakeholders feel welcome, that cultivates a sense of ownership, and that fosters a learning community.

Interviews confirmed an extremely high level of trust and respect exists between the director general and board and also validated the fact the board recognizes and preserves the executive, administrative, and leadership prerogatives of the administrative head of the school.

Comprehensive board policy and operational procedures manuals were reviewed by the QAR team and provide for effective operation of the school. Board policy provides guidance to school leadership in the following areas: financial, buildings and services, personnel, instruction, and students. Operational procedures are included in the procedure manual, the parent/student handbook, the faculty handbook, and the newcomers' guide.

A comprehensive system for obtaining, archiving, evaluating, and using student achievement and school effectiveness data is employed by the school. Teachers and school leadership utilize the results from the following assessment tools to make decisions about curriculum and instruction: the Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP), ERB's WrAP, PSAT, SAT, Advanced Placement, and ENLACE (Mexican national standardized test). Stakeholder opinion survey data is also used to evaluate school effectiveness and informs school improvement plan development.

Many opportunities exist for parent, teacher, and student stakeholders to lead and to participate in the decision making process. In addition to parent service on the board and board committees, many members of the school improvement team (SIT) are parent representatives. Teachers may serve on any one of the following committees: director general's teacher advisory, technology and academics, curriculum, climate,

security, green, and school improvement. As an example of participation in the decision making process by teachers, the newly implemented one-to-one laptop program was initiated by a grade seven teacher. Students have multiple opportunities to lead and to participate in the decision making process by service on the climate, green, and cafeteria committees, student council, National Junior Honor Society, National Honor Society, Week without Walls leadership, and as service learning leaders. Additionally, all stakeholder groups have the opportunity to provide valuable feedback by completing the annual school climate stakeholder opinion survey. Survey data is analyzed and is systematically used to inform school improvement planning.

Professional development for teachers and school leadership is aligned with the school's vision, mission, and learning goals; however, the school provides limited professional development for maintenance, office support, and other non-professional staff.

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

- Extremely high levels of trust and respect between members of the governance body, the director general, and the leadership team facilitates collaboration and decision making about school improvement initiatives.
- Multiple opportunities are available to students, parents, and teachers to play leadership roles and to participate in the decision making process.
- Exemplary collaboration between all stakeholder groups has created a school climate that fosters a feeling of ownership for student success and institutional effectiveness.
- The collection, analysis, and use of relevant student achievement and school effectiveness data is facilitated by the school's comprehensive and systematic assessment plan.

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

- Ensure all staff, including office support and maintenance, participate in job-focused professional development.

Finding: The American School Foundation of Guadalajara, A.C. has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 3: Teaching and Learning

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

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

The curriculum of ASFG is researched-based, standards centered, and designed to meet the requirements for the US high school diploma and the Mexican "bachillerato" diploma. This coherent, rigorous curriculum provides opportunities for all students to become purposeful learners, critical and creative thinkers, effective communicators, and contributors to the community in accordance with the school's mission and learning goals.

Teacher interviews and a review of documents confirm that the faculty, leadership,

and staff have collaboratively developed curriculum documents that attest to the articulation and alignment between and among all levels of the school. Multiple curriculum formats (scope and sequence, curriculum guides, curriculum mapping) are available to teachers which enable them to understand how their work contributes to the curriculum of the entire school.

Based on a review of documents, interviews with school community stakeholders, and classroom observations, it is evident that curricular and educational decisions are based on data and research. The curriculum for the core subject areas delineates standards, expectations, content, skills and scope and sequence for effective implementation. As standards are modified, so the curriculum is reviewed and revised.

Instructional strategies utilized by the teachers reflect best practices and challenge each student to excel, e.g. project-based learning experiences, differentiated instruction, integration of technology, use of manipulatives, and hands-on activities in the classrooms. Teachers understand the importance of higher order thinking skills and consistently provide students with opportunities to reflect and participate in thought provoking and active learning experiences. Enrichment and curricular program activities further the development of the whole child.

Formative and summative assessments are used to provide teachers and students with concrete information on how to guide teaching and learning to improve student achievement. Common assessments for evaluating student learning are being developed for all subject areas where standards and expectations currently exist.

Student interviews and classroom observations confirmed that the faculty and leadership have created a safe learning environment that fosters a high level of student engagement in the learning process. A review of the annual survey results confirmed that the school climate is monitored to ensure instructional time is maximized and students are challenged to reach their potential.

The implementation of appropriate interventions to support at-risk students is a school-wide focus. Teachers within each section have formulated action plans noting how they will provide these interventions. Training and professional development further the intervention process to help all students meet expectations for student learning.

Professional development is a priority for ASFG and is tied to results of staff evaluations. The Board and administration recognize and financially support the need to train teachers on new techniques, programs, and initiatives prior to their full implementation, e.g. 1-1 technology program, Response to Intervention (RTI) program, and Singapore math. Teacher teams within grade levels or content areas work together to analyze individual student performance and participate in the evaluation of the curriculum, instructional programs, and the effectiveness of teaching strategies.

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

- Faculty, staff, and leadership provide a learning environment that fosters a high level of student engagement in the learning process.
- The ASFG comprehensive curriculum and use of researched-based instructional strategies provides for the academic success of every student.
- Faculty use of project-based learning promotes the development of students as purposeful learners, creative and critical thinkers, and problem solvers.
- Leadership is committed to providing professional development opportunities and training for staff in order to ensure the effective implementation of new programs and initiatives and further enhance their professional expertise.

- Collaborative efforts of the faculty and staff ensure the continuous improvement of the school's curriculum and use of effective instructional techniques that reflect best practices.

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

- Development of common assessments for all subjects and all grade levels will further enhance the alignment of the curriculum and the effectiveness of instructional strategies utilized across all sections of the school.

Finding: The American School Foundation of Guadalajara, A.C. has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 4: Documenting and Using Results

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

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

The school has a well-established culture of data management and analysis with staff demonstrating a commitment to data based decision making at all levels. Administrative staff including the director of academic support, principals, department heads and grade level leaders support teachers by providing disaggregated data and by guiding teachers in the monitoring and evaluation of results to improve student achievement and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. Meaningful discussions of data take place at both grade level and subject level meetings and there is evidence that the school triangulates results so as to consolidate information and increase its validity. Presently the school does not have a protocol for data analysis. A variety of assessments are administered to students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. These include MAP, PSAT, WrAP assessments, and AP together with the Mexican ENLACE exams. Teachers confirmed that these exams were aligned with the academic programs, providing information which is reliable, valid and bias free. The school demonstrates verifiable growth through the MAP tests and comparative analysis of this data indicates that results are solidly above US norms. The school uses comparison and trend data of student performance from comparable schools in evaluating its effectiveness but recognizes that more of this type of analysis would be beneficial. The school has a comprehensive internal system for assessing student progress towards meeting the school's learning goals. However, teachers have significant autonomy in determining the types of performance measures they use to demonstrate achievement and this could be leading to a greater level of subjectivity than is perhaps desirable. This has been recognized and steps are being taken to increase validity and reliability through the implementation of common assessments and rubrics. The school uses a variety of methods to communicate results. All stakeholders indicated the effectiveness of the Powerschool student information system in providing accurate and timely information about student progress. Guidelines are provided for the use of this system in the parent-student handbook. In addition, information on progress is shared at formal teacher- parent conferences and student led portfolio conferences, while all stakeholders indicated that the open door policy facilitates regular feedback on a personal level. The school regularly celebrates student achievement in both academic and non-academic areas through a variety of awards, assemblies, publications, newsletters, honor roll and classroom displays. Students are also encouraged and given the opportunity to recognize and reward positive contributions among their peers. In addition to gathering data

on student achievement, the school conducts yearly climate surveys, the results of which are analyzed to form the basis of action plans for school improvement which are then shared with stakeholder groups. All stakeholders recognized the value of these surveys and the high completion rate in all sections of the school community. The school maintains a secure, accurate, and complete student record system in accordance with requirements of the Mexican Secretary of Public Education (SEP).

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

- The well-established system of data analysis and the commitment of all stakeholders facilitates the data-driven decision making process.
- Effective communication of results promotes accountability and student ownership of their own learning process.

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

- Develop and implement a school-wide assessment policy with guidelines for teachers and essential agreements on assessment practices.
- Continue to develop common assessments and collaborative evaluations in all grade levels and areas.
- Introduce a protocol for data analysis to support teachers and facilitate a standardized approach to the process.

Finding: The American School Foundation of Guadalajara, A.C. has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 5: Resource and Support Systems

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

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

The school employs a systematic process to recruit, employ, retain, and mentor highly qualified teaching staff. Foreign hire teachers meet requirements as determined by No Child Left Behind certification standards and are assigned positions based on their areas of expertise. The human resources department facilitates travel, housing, contracts, helps teachers understand how to pay utilities, and assists them with furniture acquisition. As the human resources representative stated, "Our job is to make them feel at home." National hires meet SEP (Secretary of Public Education) and UNAM (National Autonomous Mexican University). Both local and foreign hire teachers have numerous opportunities for professional development throughout the year; however, non-teaching members of the staff experience very limited professional development opportunities. ASFG teachers are given the opportunity to receive additional educational materials and/or special trainings. Requests are submitted to the principals, who in turn approach the school head. Depending on the cost, board approval may be sought. The decisions are based on available budget, authorization, and allocation of funds. The school's finances are audited by an outside agency once a year. The QAR team reviewed the school's crisis management plan as well as documented evaluations of emergency evacuation drills. Support staff are qualified and are sufficient in number to ensure the school facilities, while aging and in need of constant upgrading and repair, are clean, safe, and

well maintained. Personnel include a nursing staff, a paramedic, maintenance, security, nurses, information technologists, secretaries and human resources. The board has exhibited both vision and perseverance by acquiring a large tract of land for expansion or a new facility. Special education services are available to the special needs population, and aides are assigned to students who need full-time help. Teachers with special needs students follow an Individual Education Support plan which may include modifications such as extended time for assignments or testing in quiet areas. Additionally, each student has access to guidance services that include counseling, appraisal, mentoring, staff consulting, referral, and educational and career planning.

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

- The outstanding effort by the human resources department makes new teachers feel welcome and facilitates their integration into the community.
- Vision and perseverance by the board and the director general has resulted in the purchase of a large tract of land for development, expansion, or a new facility.

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

- Construction of a new school facility would allow reallocation of resources spent in maintaining the original facilities to further streamline support systems.

Finding: The American School Foundation of Guadalajara, A.C. has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 6: Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

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

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

The school fosters an environment of transparency and openness promoting active participation on behalf of all stakeholders. Different committees composed of teachers, administrators, students, alumni and parents work together to identify initiatives and take decisions which will facilitate goal attainment. Some examples include the climate committee, the green committee, the cafeteria committee and the SIT. These groups evidence the willingness of the school to listen to its stakeholders and provide them with a voice. The school uses an annual climate survey as the principal means by which to solicit feedback from stakeholders. The results from this survey are used as a basis for identifying goals for school improvement and also measure progress towards those goals. Other surveys are sent out opportunistically to promote stakeholder contributions on current issues. Parents are actively encouraged to participate in the student learning process. Open house and new parent meetings at the start of each year are used to share learning expectations and goals which are then followed up through parent teacher conferences and other more informal meetings throughout the year. Students are encouraged to take on responsibility for their own learning through student led portfolio conferences in which they discuss their progress towards learning goals. Students and parents are kept informed about classroom activities via individual teacher webpages. The student information system Powerschool is recognized as a highly effective means by which to track student achievement progress and to promote accountability. The proactive parents association encourages parental participation in special events, programs and also facilitates the room mother system which is

active throughout all sections of the school. The parents' association also contributes effectively to the induction for new families although it is recognized that there is a need to ensure there is support for those new arrivals who do not speak Spanish or English. The academic programs and school improvement initiatives are described and explained to stakeholders through a variety of publications including the school website, the school magazine (Connexions) and the monthly Director's Bulletin. Student achievement is celebrated in the award winning literary magazine "Sin Fronteras" and "Amalgamation" as well as being highlighted in classroom displays, student portfolios, and assemblies. Communication lines among the board, director, administration, teachers, students, parents, and the wider community are clearly defined in the student/parent and teacher manuals. The effectiveness of this system together with the genuinely open door policy of the school is evident in the high level of satisfaction expressed by all stakeholders regarding communication effectiveness.

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

- The parents association is proactive and contributes to organizational effectiveness and student learning in all sections.
- The openness and transparency of the school leadership team has filtered through to all levels of the school promoting an exceptionally collaborative and cooperative environment.
- A high level of value is placed on student achievement and is highlighted in media ranging from classroom displays and newsletters to professional quality school publications.

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

- Establish a communication plan to consolidate best practices currently employed and to ensure their continuation.

Finding: The American School Foundation of Guadalajara, A.C. has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 7: Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

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

ASFG surveys their entire school community on an annual basis as a means of determining their stakeholders' levels of satisfaction with the educational programs, services, and opportunities provided for students. Suggestions for improvement are welcomed and taken seriously by the SIT. The annual report prepared by the Director General offers an extensive and rich description of students' performance, organizational effectiveness, and current descriptions of the students and the community. The faculty and school leadership provided QAR team members clear evidence of their commitment to school improvement. Each of the four sections within the school is required annually to identify academic goals for the American program that will improve student performance in math, reading, and writing. Goals for improving student reading, writing and oral expression capabilities are established for the Mexican program. Detailed plans specifying actions, timelines, responsible persons, monitoring structures, and resources for the successful implementation and ultimate attainment of each goal are formulated. The

faculty acknowledges a need to increase their communications and monitoring of their action plans throughout the school year. The SIP identifies additional improvement areas that address student remedial or enrichment support, school-wide fine arts program, improving the learning environment, technology, institutional advancement, and facilities. The team reviewed documents that clearly articulated improvement goals, expectations, and evaluation measures for each area. While the QAR team was impressed with the school's plans to address multiple organizational improvement needs there was little evidence to show these had been prioritized to ensure effective implementation. The SIT determined that implementing an intervention program for students in need of remedial or enrichment support could positively impact the success of all students. While ASFG teachers have always provided extra support for students, there has been no uniformity or specific strategies for this to occur. As a result, providing interventions for students in need of remediation or enrichment became a school-wide goal. Teachers in each section formulated action plans on how they would implement the intervention initiative. The team reviewed the school-wide intervention documents however found no evidence of a school-wide alignment of interventions across sections of the school other than the allocation of a set period of time (one hour). Indicators that could measure the impact and success of these efforts on a school-wide basis were not evident.

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

- The long-standing commitment of the faculty to providing support for students in need of remediation or enrichment support is exceptional.
- The collaborative efforts of the SIT to gather input from the various stakeholder groups to better inform their planning for school-wide improvement is extraordinary.
- The detailed action plans designed to address the academic goals of each section provide clear direction for ensuring a successful implementation process and attainment of the goals.

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

- Increase communication and regular monitoring of all action plans throughout the school year to support ongoing improvement efforts.
- Identify and utilize indicators on a school-wide basis that will determine the effectiveness of efforts to implement interventions for students in need of remedial and enrichment support.
- Prioritize organizational improvement plans to ensure effective implementation.

Finding: The American School Foundation of Guadalajara, A.C. has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Conclusion

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

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

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

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Stephen E. Sibley, Chair/Lead Evaluator (AdvancED)
- Charles Zeller, Team Member
- Ms. Ruth M. Allen, Team Member (Colegio Albania)
- Dr. Mary Ann Keeley, Team Member (AdvancED)

AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

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

Vision and Purpose

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

Governance and Leadership

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

Teaching and Learning

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

Documenting and Using Results

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

Resource and Support Systems

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

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

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

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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