

**Report of the  
Quality Assurance Review Team  
for  
Northville Public Schools**

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

# Quality Assurance Review Report

## Contents

About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI .....	3
Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review .....	4
Summary of Findings .....	5
Commendations .....	6
Recommendations .....	7
Next Steps .....	8
Standards for Accreditation .....	10
Standard 1. Vision & Purpose .....	10
Standard 2. Governance & Leadership .....	12
Standard 3. Teaching & Learning .....	14
Standard 4. Documenting & Using Results .....	16
Standard 5. Resource & Support Systems .....	19
Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications & Relationships .....	20
Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement .....	22
Quality Assurance Findings .....	25
Conclusion .....	27
Appendix .....	28
Quality Assurance Review Team Members .....	28
AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems .....	28

# 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, school districts and their schools must:

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

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

# Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), a division of AdvancED, visited Northville Public Schools on 12/06/2009 - 12/09/2009.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 27 administrators, 89 teachers, 25 support staff, 54 parents and business partners, 71 students, and 6 Board of Education members for a total of 272 stakeholders. In addition to meeting with district personnel and stakeholders, the team visited 7 schools within the school district. During the school visits, team members interviewed school stakeholders, observed classrooms, and reviewed relevant school artifacts. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the district. Specifically, the team examined the district's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

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

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

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

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

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

## Commendations

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

- **Honoring the purpose of District Accreditation by aligning the work of the district and its schools through a continuous focus on student achievement and improvement.**

Throughout the Quality Assurance Review team's visit, there was evidence that Northville Public Schools' stakeholders understand the importance of a systematic and systemic approach to improvement as well as the importance of addressing the seven AdvancED standards on a continuing basis.

Each year, district-wide goals are established to support Northville's overarching goal of student learning. Annually, principals and their staffs develop school improvement plans that are aligned with district expectations and goals. The establishment and implementation of the District School Improvement Team (DSIT) process provides a vehicle for demonstrating continuous improvement progress throughout the system. This creative option focuses on system-wide communications and fosters a climate of collaboration and trust among stakeholders. School staffs share their progress with pride and request ideas and suggestions for furthering and expanding their improvement efforts. A climate of trust and respect has been clearly established in the Northville Public Schools.

Bringing staff members together with other stakeholders to focus on system-wide goals and strategies for improving student achievement is an important and significant approach for ensuring student success on a system-wide basis. When individual stakeholders feel valued and understood in their roles, it expands the opportunities and potential for them to make a difference and impact the district's vision, mission and goals.

- **Demonstrating strong shared leadership.**

From the superintendent to cabinet members, principals, teacher leaders, students, parents, and community stakeholders, there is a collaborative approach to continuously achieving the district's vision, mission, and goals. The superintendent provides the school and community with exemplary leadership and a sense of confidence that the Northville Public Schools is managed effectively and expertly. Cabinet members provide knowledge and expertise in their areas of specialty along with support and assistance to the school settings. Principals are perceived as extremely competent and skillful in focusing improvement priorities in their settings. Teachers are valued for their instructional expertise and for their personal attributes of encouragement, compassion, and hopefulness for the young people they influence each day. Students are clear regarding their expectations for learning and believe their schools are good places in which to learn. Parents and community members are proud of the accomplishments of the school system and feel there are opportunities for them to be involved and for their suggestions and concerns to be heard.

A high degree of dedication and involvement by stakeholders provides system cohesiveness and creates a unified culture. Northville's positive culture results in high expectations for all learners as well as exceptional achievement by all stakeholders.

- **An extraordinary culture of respect and pride among all its stakeholders.**

Through interviews and observations, QAR team members concluded that there is wide-spread stakeholder support for the work of the superintendent, central office staff, and school principals and their staffs. Not only is there stakeholder appreciation for the work these persons do, but also for their commitment to student achievement and over-all excellence. Parents and community members continually express pride in the Northville Public Schools, and recognize the value of the well-rounded education students are receiving. Pride and support is evident through the authentic involvement of stakeholders in a variety of activities (e.g., school PTA committees, District Curriculum Council, Education Partnerships Program, Northville Public School Foundation).

When stakeholders support their schools and are engaged in the district's work, both learners and the community benefit. A positive culture in the schools can be directly connected to a positive quality of life in the community.

## Recommendations

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

- **Expand the current assessment system by incorporating additional formative and alternative methods for measuring student progress. The team recommends an initiative be put in place that promotes the value and credibility of formative methods, establishes a common language, and deepens understanding of how data can be used at all levels (e.g., district, department, school, teacher, student) to inform instructional practice and improve learning.**

The Northville Public Schools utilizes a variety of state and district tests and is attempting to incorporate common assessments in certain core areas. However, team members noted the inconsistency of the use of formative and common assessments in the school settings. In a District School Improvement Report abstract it was stated that not all students demonstrating proficiency on state assessments are performing well on classroom assessments or in coursework. It was also stated that the state standard for proficiency in each content area is not necessarily at the level Northville is seeking for its students. The Northville Public Schools has a reputation of excellence and high expectations for its learners and is committed to measuring student success beyond standardized state tests.

Incorporating multiple formative measures into the district's assessment plan will broaden its scope and add needed richness, depth, and balance to the current assessment and accountability program. Continuing to communicate the district's high expectations for learners, and utilizing measurements that identify success will augment Northville's premier reputation.

- **Strengthen the alignment between the Northville Public Schools vision and its Graduate Profile/Adult Role expectations (e.g., Analytical Thinker, Effective Communicator, Quality Contributor) by clearly defining student measurements or assessments to determine if students are meeting these high expectations.**

In 1994, The Northville Board of Education adopted five areas of core knowledge and skills for students to master before they graduate. These Graduate Profile/Adult Roles have been consistently reviewed and reaffirmed over the years as important focus areas for Northville students. The district's current vision supports the development of a well-rounded student through expectations associated with "continuous learner" and "world class citizen." Through interviews it was clear that Northville stakeholders value the importance of their students being able to demonstrate compassion and service to others. While students demonstrate high academic achievement in all areas, there is insufficient evidence indicating student accomplishment of characteristics associated with the Graduate Profile/Adult Roles.

The Northville Public Schools is regarded as a system of excellence. Defining the core knowledge and skills associated with each of the five areas (i.e., Analytical Thinker, Effective Communicator, Quality Contributor, Continuous Learner, World Class Citizen) for its graduates will provide system-wide clarity for what constitutes a contributing adult and future leader. By identifying increasingly higher level expectations for students and means for measuring student progress, Northville's vision for producing world class citizens will be even further enhanced.

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

## Next Steps

The school district should:

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

## Resources

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

## Celebrating Accreditation

Following the visit, the Quality Assurance Review Team submits an accreditation recommendation to AdvancED for review and action at the national level by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the school district. Upon receiving its accreditation, the school district

should celebrate its achievement with the community. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and other related items can be ordered from the website to help you share your accomplishment with your community.

### **Summary**

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

# Standards for Accreditation

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

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

## Standard 1. Vision & Purpose

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

**Description:**

The overarching goal of the Northville Public Schools, student learning, is clearly valued and articulated by members of all stakeholder groups within the school district. Although this ultimate goal appears to have been originally generated by the superintendent of schools, it is now universally supported by all stakeholder groups. In addition to this overarching goal, the district established its current mission and vision statements in 1988 as part of the strategic planning initiative. Since that time, the district has moved away from strategic planning and has implemented a more “bottom up” approach to school improvement. However, even with this move away from strategic planning, the district maintained the mission and vision statements created during the original process.

During 2006-2007, the district revisited all of its guiding documents. At that time, stakeholder groups were involved in the revision of these documents in a variety of different ways. Staff was invited to provide feedback by way of email and participation in a district survey instrument. District leaders facilitated discussions with their staffs regarding the revision of these documents. Parents were invited to participate in discussions during PTA/PTSA meetings, school improvement team meetings, and as participants in the District Curriculum Council. Based upon feedback from stakeholder groups, the Board of Education adopted revisions to the mission, vision, beliefs, Graduate Profile and Adult Roles in March of 2007.

When asked about the mission of the district, all stakeholder groups did an excellent job of articulating the mission in their own words. Individual stakeholders consistently highlighted the following aspects of the district's mission statement:

- a commitment to excellence
- expectations of personal success
- being responsible citizens (locally and globally)
- maintaining a caring community

- operating within a challenging educational environment

When asked about the district's vision during teacher interviews, teachers mentioned certain expectations consistently. They frequently stated how the following themes impacted their work:

- civic responsibility and the expectation that graduates are prepared to serve others (in a global community)
- partnerships with the community
- expectations for students to be successful in school

Staff members mentioned with less consistency the following themes: “teachers as educational leaders” or “respect for individuals.” However, it was clear from a variety of interviews, and especially in student interviews, that the concept of respect for all individuals is an underlying expectation throughout the school district.

Based on a review of Northville's artifacts (e.g., district profile, school and district annual reports, community surveys) and stakeholder interviews, the information shared regarding student performance is useful and important. First and foremost, it is evident through conducting parent and community interviews that the community is supportive of the Northville Public Schools and they are particularly proud of the district's achievements and its effectiveness. Stakeholders believe that students are prepared for the future as a result of the district's focus on civic responsibility and a caring attitude. It is also apparent that parents and community see themselves as vital partners in educating the youth of Northville, Michigan. An outstanding level of stakeholder pride in its school system coupled with the belief that Northville Public Schools provides excellent educational opportunities for its students are two enduring strengths of the Northville community. The school district has a positive impact on the community due to its infused purpose and direction for Northville's young citizens.

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

- The district places a clear emphasis on civic responsibility and community outreach. Teachers and staff demonstrate a commitment to this principle through their involvement in outreach programs such as Kids Against Hunger, Kids4Afghan, Rotary Interact and a multitude of other civic outreach programs.
- The district reinforces adherence to the overarching goal of “Student Learning” and all stakeholder groups recognize and articulate this goal.
- The district has written documents that define the mission, vision, beliefs, parameters and Graduate Profile. In addition, the creation of most of these documents date back to 1988 and many of the concepts contained within these documents are now significantly infused into the culture of the district and the community.
- The mission and vision of the district guides the allocation of resources as illustrated by the primary focus on school resources rather than increasing resources at the district level.
- Parents consistently comment on the strength of the district's communications with the community regarding all aspects of the functioning of the schools.

**Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement - The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:**

- The Graduate Profile and Adult Roles reflect excellent desired outcomes of graduates from the Northville Public Schools. However, stakeholders were not always clear regarding how to measure student success in these areas. Consider identifying and developing assessments that would help the district to determine the success of graduates in attaining these standards.
- Consider posting key district documents (mission, vision, beliefs, parameters, and Graduate Profile)

in highly visible areas of the schools to promote awareness of these important concepts to all stakeholder groups.

**Finding:** Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional", indicating that the Northville Public Schools has met the accreditation requirements for the "Vision & Purpose" standard.

## Standard 2. Governance & Leadership

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

### Description:

The Northville Public Schools demonstrates a highly effective process for governing its system and its schools as demonstrated by written policies and procedures that are clearly communicated and available to all stakeholders. As the team reviewed a variety of artifacts, members concluded that the following documents illustrate the organizational effectiveness of the system: School Board Policy and Procedure Manuals, Budgeting and Purchasing protocols, Handbooks for Student/Parents and Staff, School Volunteer Handbooks, Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Plans, Para Educator Resource Guides, Mentor/Novice Teacher Resource Guides, and New Teacher Orientation Process Guides. In addition, there is a clearly articulated organizational chart for the Northville Public Schools and a board subcommittee structure that provides opportunities for dialogue between administrative liaisons and the board. The subcommittee structure provides opportunity for deeper review and collaboration in the following five areas: Instructional Services, Administrative Services, Finance, Human Resources, and Policy.

Interviews with central office administrators indicate there are staff members in place with a high level of expertise and competency in their areas of responsibility. The district's staff demonstrates its significant skill level in a variety of ways. State and federal reports, as well as financial audit reports, are consistently rated as high quality.

When issues or concerns arise, the district's leadership takes the initiative for involving stakeholders and making decisions based on data and feedback. The district's reaction to the potential loss of state aid is one example where a comprehensive and inclusive approach was used to solicit stakeholder input. The superintendent and his staff organized and implemented community forums titled "Managing Our Future." Through these forums, stakeholders were involved in discussions designed to determine how to best manage Northville's resources and its future. Documents and presentation materials were also posted on the district's website and stakeholders were invited to complete feedback forms regarding their preferred options for dealing with potential budget reductions.

School board members are committed to the school system and to maintaining a culture where the allocation of resources is aligned with the district's vision and purpose. They are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities and recognize that there is a formal protocol for responding to parent or community inquiries. While they are visible and available to community stakeholders, they use the wealth of district policy and procedural documents as their resources for responding to requests for information. They also recognize and value the importance of opportunities for the public to share their comments and concerns through regularly scheduled board meetings and other community forums.

Interviews with school board members illustrated their respect for the superintendent and his staff and the appreciation they have for the open dialogue that exists between and among district and school administrators. Based on interviews with parents and other stakeholders, the superintendent and the board members are considered readily accessible and visible in the community. Stakeholders commented that the superintendent and board members appear on a non-stop schedule based on their attendance at public events.

Accountability and collaboration are demonstrated throughout the district in a variety of ways. One of the most creative and positive approaches is the District School Improvement Team concept (DSIT). Certain team members observed the process by attending half day meetings of school teams with the district leadership (e.g., the superintendent, assistant superintendent for instructional learning). School teams shared updates regarding their school plans and progress as well as other accomplishments they wished to highlight. Not only do school stakeholders (i.e., teachers, parents, students) have an opportunity to learn what their colleagues are doing in other settings, but there is also a focus on accountability as teams must be prepared to share feedback, suggestions, or other comments that illustrate “lessons learned.”

As stated by the superintendent, the Northville Public Schools values professional development opportunities that reflect a continuing focus on growth and are not regarded as one-time episodic events. The Galileo Leadership Consortium allows Northville teachers to be engaged in teacher leadership opportunities and to study issues designed to enhance student learning. Throughout the school year, regularly scheduled times are set aside for professional development at both the district level and the school level. This approach ensures system-wide attention to district-wide generated goals and expectations, as well as customized opportunities for targeted school-based professional development.

The recent (and continuing) work on the teacher evaluation process is an example of a comprehensive approach to improving teacher effectiveness and relies on more than the traditional scheduled classroom observation format. A variety of artifacts (e.g., lesson plans, student work, assessments) and other indicators (e.g., involvement with curriculum development, interactions with colleagues) are identified as potential evidence for what constitutes teacher proficiency and professionalism.

The focus on stable and competent leadership is apparent throughout the Northville Public Schools. Stakeholders – no matter where they reside (i.e., district office, schools, community) – are clear regarding their roles and responsibilities and demonstrate a commitment to maintaining a culture of excellence for the community of Northville.

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

- The superintendent is seen as a highly trusted individual who embodies strong leadership skills and works well with community organizations (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club), local elected officials, and parent groups (e.g., PTA/PTSA District committee). One parent described the superintendent as a “model of leadership.”
- The superintendent’s leadership has been instrumental in establishing pride in Northville’s values and focus on student learning and student responsibility.
- The School Board subcommittee structure, embedded in the district organizational chart, demonstrates an innovative approach to soliciting input from internal stakeholders in order to consider district level changes in curriculum, programs, strategies, and policies.
- The District Continuous Improvement process and the District School Improvement Team (DSIT) model provide direction for building level school improvement teams and contribute to a systematic approach for improvement and accountability throughout the system.
- Parent and community leaders are recognized as viable contributors to the district’s success and

serve as valuable volunteer resources in all aspects of the district's work.

- The district's policies and procedures are clear and comprehensive and are deeply embedded in the way the system and its schools function – thus contributing to a high level of confidence among Northville stakeholders regarding the district's governance.

**Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement - The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:**

- While the District Continuous Improvement process is a strength for Northville, there is a need to consider a common template for all schools to follow as they develop their school improvement plans. It is suggested that principals and teachers include measureable objectives in their plans along with evaluation benchmarks that can be used to monitor progress on a formative basis.

**Finding:** Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional", indicating that the Northville Public Schools has met the accreditation requirements for the "Governance & Leadership" standard.

## Standard 3. Teaching & Learning

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

**Description:**

The Northville Public Schools demonstrates a commitment to the overarching goal of student learning in a variety of ways. The District School Improvement Team (DSIT) process provides school stakeholders an opportunity to share with each other how they are addressing student learning in their own individual settings. School improvement teams are encouraged to share their best practices and approaches for facilitating high student performance in both the academic and social arenas. The DSIT process has prompted teachers to come together from different schools and learn from one another how to maximize student learning.

The focus on preventing early learning failure is another means of ensuring that all students accomplish the “Overarching Student Learning” goal and “successfully complete each grade level and/or course taken.” Northville Public Schools has made a commitment to reaching this goal by implementing a strong early identification program (*Response to Intervention – Rtl*) and early intervention strategies for “at risk” learners at the elementary level. The success of this program is evident when examining the district's percentage of students who qualify for special education services (currently 5.9%) and comparing it to the much higher state average (14.6%).

Opportunities for professional development also support the overarching goal of student learning. Principals and teachers shared in interviews that they consistently address the four critical questions as they address curriculum, instruction, and assessment in their schools: *What is it we expect learners to learn/be able to do? How will we know if they've learned it? How will we respond if they haven't? How will we respond if they've already learned it?* District administrators participate in monthly ongoing professional development. Topics include strategies for effective teaching, evaluation, and leadership skills. Teachers are provided financial support to attend conferences and are offered tuition reimbursement to support continuous learning. Principals monitor teacher performance by conducting walk-through

classroom visits, and implementing the new teacher evaluation process for non-tenure teachers. Tenure teachers have the option of using a goal based evaluation model or the new evaluation process based on the Danielson's 'Framework for Teaching' model.

There is a formal process for alignment and implementation of curriculum in the Northville Public Schools as evidenced by the Curriculum Process Review Chart available on the district website. A district Curriculum Council Committee comprised of parents, students, teachers and administrators reviews curriculum recommendations made by core content curriculum committees as evidenced by the Curriculum Committee binders and minutes from meetings. Teachers are allocated time to work on curriculum, and additional prep time is provided to K-8 teachers for collaboration. This allows teachers the time to work on alignment of curriculum and instruction, plan activities and field trips, discuss ideas or issues in a collaborative manner, and develop strategies for continuous improvement.

Pacing guides and common assessments are in various stages of creation and implementation across the district as evidenced by the school improvement plan documentation from the schools and discussions with curriculum and teaching staff.

Based on visits to classrooms, instructional delivery is varied and is designed to engage students in interactions with their peers as well as with the teacher/instructor. Instructional methods vary from room to room providing an instructional continuum using multiple intelligences. District-wide presentations to the Quality Assurance Review team members along with interviews conducted by team members confirm the district's vision to graduate learners who are able to contribute to society and serve as future leaders. There is a focus on both academic achievement and community service. Students are encouraged to participate in a variety of civic and community projects that extend learning beyond the classroom walls.

While the technology in the district is still emerging (as is often the case when dealing with the ever changing and fast paced world of technology), many facets of technology and media services are in place and working effectively to foster a positive learning climate at all sites. At the elementary level students receive instruction in keyboarding skills by media specialists. Teachers and students have access to laptop carts and computer labs in each building. Students at the center programs have computer assisted learning supported by both the district and the county.

Instructional time during the day is guarded at the elementary level by reserving a language arts block either in the morning or the afternoon to ensure quality uninterrupted time. Resource room support is offered to students struggling with reading and writing. Teacher/principal created math assessments are used at one school to pre-identify students who may experience difficulties in mathematics. This is all part of the strong commitment to early intervention. Learning consultants and resource room teachers are available in elementary schools to support staff and students.

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

- Reading assistance is provided at the elementary level to support students before they fail or are referred for special education services.
- Instructional coaches offer a variety of valuable services to classroom teachers. They are available to model effective teaching strategies in the classroom, provide suggestions for instructional best practices, or provide support in the use of data (e.g., data interpretation and analysis) and research.
- Leadership at the school and district level provides consistent support with professional development, collaboration time, and curriculum focus.
- High achieving students are supported by the Alternative Learning Program for Students (ALPS), honors courses, and Advanced Placement courses.
- The "Graduate Profile/Adult Roles" focus ensures that district stakeholders begin with the end in

mind as they develop curriculum and programs for K-12 students.

- The district has a commitment to continuous curriculum review and alignment, and to continuing to incorporate a wide range of research-based best practices in its schools.

**Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement - The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:**

- While the district is committed to differentiated instruction, there is a need for more comprehensive implementation throughout the schools with a focus on ensuring the equity of learning opportunities for all students, including non-college bound students.
- Although the district has initiated the development and implementation of common formative and summative assessments, there is a need to focus on both vertical and horizontal alignment in each school.
- Continue to ensure that curriculum is aligned in all content areas and throughout the district.
- Continue to fit and integrate technology within the district wherever and whenever possible (e.g., examine and implement the International Society for Technology in Education /ISTE standards or the State of Michigan technology standards into the curriculum), and continue to explore additional instructional uses of technology to support skills needed to be a life-long learner.
- Although the district has developed “Graduate Profile/Adult Roles” for its students, it is not clear that all stakeholders can define the attributes associated with the core knowledge and skills related to these roles (e.g., what does it mean to be an *analytical thinker* or a *quality contributor*?). To fully embrace Northville’s vision for its students, develop a comprehensive description of the attributes and expectations associated with each aspect of the Graduate Profile/Adult Roles and subsequently, connect the expectations to curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- Along with the graduate profile, explore the impact of how these expectations may impact students’ senior year of high school. For example, it may be appropriate to establish a plan for a senior ‘thesis’ or project whereby students demonstrate the five adult roles referenced in the graduate profile.

**Finding:** Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational", indicating that the Northville Public Schools has met the accreditation requirements for the "Teaching & Learning" standard.

## Standard 4. Documenting & Using Results

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

**Description:**

Northville Public Schools began the implementation of its comprehensive assessment system in August of the 2008-2009 school year. The district utilizes county supported Zangle for its student information system. Zangle integrates and supports the district’s assessment and data analysis system. CLASS A (Curriculum, Learning and Assessment for Student and School Achievement), supported by Wayne RESA (Wayne County Regional Educational Service Agency), provides tools to develop common assessments and analyze assessment results. Through the use of these tools staff may develop common assessments and administer them, and collect and analyze results based on standards and content expectations. The implementation and training plan was designed to build capacity over time through a trainers’ model. The

plan was implemented in October 2008 with the Math Core Group; and was followed with training for test coordinators, learning consultants, and special education staff. Assessment results are currently used to monitor progress and to identify both advanced students and at-risk students. Further training on CLASS A is planned for the current (2009-10) school year.

The overarching goal of student learning is connected to assessment in the Northville Public Schools through the use of a multitude of state and local standardized assessments. These assessments are designed to gather information and data and eventually answer the district's four critical questions: *What is it we want students to learn/be able to do? How will we know if they've learned it? How will we respond if they haven't? How will we respond if they've already learned it?* As required, the district uses the following Michigan assessments: Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), MEAP Access, MI-Access, MME (Michigan Merit Exam), and the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA). District-wide assessments include the following: Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT), and Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). All of these assessments are uploaded to CLASS A to assist staff members in their data analysis. The DRA, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), State Assessments, CogAT, and/or ITBS are used to identify gifted and at-risk students during transitional times.

At this time, district-wide end of unit and formative common assessments are still in the development stages. However, a variety of individual school-based assessments have been developed and shared with other schools during the District School Improvement Team (DSIT) meetings. As a result of this format, elementary principals and teachers have collaborated to produce uniform building assessments and to share common intervention practices. When appropriate, these measures and their results are entered and stored on local shared drives. Team members concluded through interviews and artifacts that the above practice of collecting and using data for school improvement practices are somewhat inconsistent across the district and are dependent upon school leadership. The use of measurable objectives, within individual school improvement plans, is also inconsistent across the district.

Northville Public Schools uses "like district" comparison groups and national college readiness standards to benchmark itself for improvement. Annual reports provide a communication tool for all stakeholders and data from those reports are readily available via the district's website and paper documents located at the schools and the administration building. Parent and students also have access to teacher grade books through Web Connect (Parent and Student Connect) to monitor student progress.

While abundant data are available to stakeholders, the display of data (e.g., graphs and charts) could be improved if a common format was used across the district. In certain cases, team members observed the lack of interpretation for data displays (e.g., incomplete labeling of axis or legend) or insufficient written analysis to accompany results.

The district is committed to identifying students before they "fall between the cracks" as evidenced by their focus on intervention and early identification of at-risk students. The current district plan (2009-2010) includes a goal designed to establish a district framework for supporting each school's data-based interventions. Schools are expected to develop plans that are consistent with the Instructional Support Process and the Core Principles of Response to Intervention. Based on an examination of annual school reports, it is clear that Northville has certain major demographic groups that require additional focus and support. While "White" and "Asian-Pacific Islander" subgroups tend to perform similarly on standardized assessments, a significant gap exists between the achievement levels of these demographic groups and the "Students with Disabilities" demographic group. Team members recognized that the "Students with Disabilities" cohort group only exists on the grade three through five assessment report (as 30 students are needed within the group in order to be reported). However, it is logical to assume that

this discrepancy in achievement will follow this cohort of students through graduation and may continue to represent a gap between expectations for student learning and actual student performance. Based on Northville's district goals and its vision to help all students learn and experience success, it appears that the district is mindful of the need to continually examine its data and to use assessment results to identify areas for focus and improvement.

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

- An assessment and data analysis system, CLASS A, is currently being implemented across the district to provide stakeholders with tools to assess and monitor student achievement.
- While it is not evident that all schools are using the "T Drive" for data collection and analysis, it is clear that some schools are storing a significant amount of student achievement data on the "T Drive" and using this data to inform instructional practices.
- Multiple and varied assessment measures are used to provide a complete picture of student needs and performance.
- Parents and students have access to teacher grade books through Web Connect (Parent and Student Connect) and are able to monitor student progress on an on-going basis.
- The District School Improvement Team (DSIT) process provides a system-wide focus on the district's overarching goal (i.e., student learning) and allows all schools to respond to the district's four critical questions through a collaborative approach (i.e., *What is it we want students to learn/be able to do? How will we know if they've learned it? How will we respond if they haven't? How will we respond if they've already learned it?*).
- Curriculum committees and content advisory teams use data to evaluate the effectiveness of curricular programs and processes.

**Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement - The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:**

- Consider ongoing and repeated professional development across the district to institutionalize the use of CLASS A as a means of using data to inform instruction.
- Review how data are communicated to stakeholders and consider adding narrative or other means of interpretation to data charts or tables in an effort to more clearly articulate student results and progress.
- Explore how to examine state assessment data in detail in order to provide schools with information beyond low cut score levels (e.g., use MME math standard analysis to identify students needing additional help).
- Continue to expand professional development opportunities on a systematic basis in order to support the next levels of data analysis and use at all grade levels and by all teachers.
- Continue to identify system-wide goals for focusing improvement efforts and explore the identification of additional common and formative assessments throughout the system for documenting results in student improvement.
- Prepare for the new requirements of the state's electronic school improvement plan template (implementation scheduled for 2010-11 school year) by exploring the use of SMART objectives (Specific Measurable Attainable Results-driven Timebound) along with an increased focus on gap analysis among groups of students.
- Consider examining the root cause(s) of the discrepancy of achievement between demographic groups, and create interventions to improve the achievement level of the "Students with Disabilities" demographic group.
- Explore options for assessing students on the five elements of the Graduate Profile/Adult Roles in an effort to more clearly connect student expectations with the district's vision for student learning and performance.

**Finding:** Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational", indicating that the Northville Public Schools has met the accreditation requirements for the "Documenting & Using Results" standard.

## Standard 5. Resource & Support Systems

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

### Description:

Northville Public Schools is committed to providing the necessary resources and services to ensure that students achieve and perform at a high level. As a result, parents and other stakeholders demonstrate extreme pride in their schools and their district and are willing to support them at a high level due to Northville's reputation as an excellent school system. Northville's reputation is well deserved and is demonstrated by a variety of indicators. Students consistently perform at a high level on a variety of testing measures (e.g, MEAP-Michigan Educational Assessment Program, SAT and ACT scores, Advanced Placement exam results). Northville attracts and maintains highly qualified staff with little need to expend funds for creative or costly recruiting. Once employed by the district, there are ongoing professional development opportunities for all staff members. Examples include four days for district determined staff development, six one hour blocks of time at the building level, the Galileo Leadership Academy, and a variety of school-based professional learning community opportunities. Based on interviews, these opportunities are valued by staff and considered one of the strengths of being employed in Northville.

Over the years, the district has consistently focused on allocating resources that support student learning – the overarching goal of the district. A variety of stakeholders stated during interviews that decisions are made based on what is perceived as best for students. Based on team members' visits to the district office and schools, it is clear that the superintendent's first priority is to focus on the schools' physical facilities rather than the central office building. At the same time, it appears that staffing resources are also directed first to the schools in order to have the greatest impact on student learning.

Resources in the form of human support and fiscal revenues have consistently been identified district-wide to support school-based programs. For example, the Instructional Support Process is designed to prevent learning failure by identifying at-risk students at an early age. The intervention program titled *Response to Intervention (Rtl)* is designed to provide additional support to students not achieving at a high academic level. Instructional consultants provide support in the elementary schools to at-risk students. Where possible, student needs are met in the regular classroom setting. When appropriate, small group and pull-out configurations are available to support student learning needs.

The Energy Initiative process has led to considerable savings throughout the district and has resulted in more dollars devoted to student learning. District personnel focused efforts on reducing the use of electricity and gas in the schools and administration building in order to save energy costs. Team members observed such energy cutting strategies during their visit (e.g., posted reminders to turn off lights when exiting rooms).

In anticipation of projected cuts in state revenues, the Northville Public Schools initiated a process to

involve community and district stakeholders in dialogue regarding options for dealing with the challenge of diminishing financial resources. The Community Forum process (Managing Our Future) provided opportunities for stakeholders to hear presentations and engage in discussions regarding cost reducing alternatives available to the school district. The superintendent's experience in managing revenues over the years has led to a climate of trust and confidence in his ability to handle the current challenging economic outlook facing the district.

The Northville Public Schools' leadership demonstrates its competent management of the district in a variety of ways. Plans have been developed to deal with emergency protocols, crisis situations, and student safety protocols. In visits to schools, team members experienced security measures such as controlled access to buildings, staff member identification badges, and a guest sign-in requirement. The district is committed to a safe and secure environment for both students and staff members. This is further demonstrated by the number of schools which have positive behavior plans in place along with a Student Code of Conduct.

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

- Due to the superintendent's tenure in the school district, and the stability he provides, there is consistent and sound fiscal management of Northville Public Schools.
- The use of stakeholder involvement through community forums enhances the process for ensuring district-wide accountability in determining potential resource allocations.
- The district's energy initiative represents a creative approach to cutting costs and involving stakeholders at all levels.
- The reputation of the district and the professional development opportunities it offers assists in attracting and maintaining high quality staff.

**Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement - The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:**

- Continue to explore innovative technology to support instruction in the classroom.
- Continue to engage a variety of stakeholders in the challenges linked to potential revenue cutbacks.

**Finding:** Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational", indicating that the Northville Public Schools has met the accreditation requirements for the "Resource & Support Systems" standard.

## Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications & Relationships

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

**Description:**

Northville Public Schools provides effective communication and relationships with and among its stakeholders. Large numbers of stakeholders are involved in numerous aspects of the schools and the district. Businesses, organizations, and individuals all work together to create collaboration among the schools, the district, and Northville's stakeholders. Through interviews and observations, it was noted that the knowledge and skills of Northville's stakeholders are used in enhancing the education of students. Parents are encouraged to serve on a variety of committees. They may choose to participate at the school level by becoming involved on school improvement teams or PTA committees. At the district level, the

District Curriculum Council and the Health Advisory Board are standing committees that include parent representation. Other committees are formed each year based on specific areas of focus or specific tasks.

District administrators work diligently to listen and communicate with community stakeholders. Forums are held to inform stakeholders and gather input regarding proposed changes in potentially challenging issues such as the impact of huge increases in student enrollment, or declining budget allotment from the state. Stakeholder input is considered in making the decisions for district improvement or modifications.

District and school communications are regularly facilitated through monthly building newsletters, quarterly district newsletters, the district website, Parent Connect, Student Connect, and numerous listserves. Individual schools and teachers also utilize other means of communication to parents and the community depending on the setting. In interviews, parents frequently commented on their appreciation of such regular and informative communications.

Annually, the superintendent provides a “State of the School System” address to community and business officials. This avenue for communicating the success of the Northville Public Schools is provided in conjunction with the Northville Chamber of Commerce State of the Community event and supports the positive relationship between the schools and the community. The Education Partnerships Program is another example of the rich connection between the schools and the community as over 200 businesses and community organizations are involved in programs impacting students at every level.

The Northville superintendent encourages and participates in committees in the district such as DSIT, building PTA/PTSA meetings, and many others. He exceeds expectations in his attendance at and participation with city and community leaders, legislators, and the state department of education. He is visible on a regular basis, and is known for encouraging feedback, his ability to listen, and his willingness to act on suggestions appropriately. Other district leaders are recognized for their visibility and participation in the community and are appreciated for their strong work ethic. From the superintendent to the central office staff to the principals in the schools, there are expectations in place for administrators to perform above and beyond basic role or job descriptions.

The culture of the Northville district is positive, even though faced with potential dramatic cuts in school funding. A “can-do” attitude and pride in the district and the schools is an overarching theme clearly apparent through interviews with community members, parents, board members, teachers, administrators, and students. Stakeholders are equally proud of their students’ high level of academic achievement as well as their commitment to local and world-wide community service.

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

- Communication is open and effective between a variety of stakeholders and the superintendent, and is considered a two-way approach (i.e., both from the superintendent and to the superintendent).
- The Northville Public School Foundation is an asset in both fundraising and channeling community support.
- The district’s Education Partnership Program provides relevant enriching opportunities for students.
- Stakeholders are highly involved through district-wide committee membership opportunities and through volunteering at individual schools.
- School and district information is shared consistently in both monthly building and quarterly district newsletters.
- Technology is used effectively to communicate with stakeholders (e.g., district website and listserv, Parent Connect, Student Connect).
- Input from stakeholders is effectively sought through community forum opportunities.

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**Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement - The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:**

- Continue to involve community members in assisting the district with developing and coordinating existing and new methods of communication.

**Finding:** Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional", indicating that the Northville Public Schools has met the accreditation requirements for the "Stakeholder Communications & Relationships" standard.

## Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

**Description:**

Northville Public School's mission, vision, beliefs, Graduate Profile, and district goals provide focus and direction for decision making for all stakeholders. The district's overarching goal, its goal setting process, and the existence and use of the District School Improvement Team (DSIT) process also provide a framework for continuous improvement across the district.

Northville moved from a traditional strategic planning model to a school improvement process that embraces one overarching goal: "all students will successfully complete each grade level and/or course, demonstrating proficiency on local and state assessments." In order to achieve this district goal, individual school improvement plans are aligned with the district's overarching goal. It was clear through interviews and observations that Northville educators and community members embrace and act on this system-wide goal.

Northville's culture of commitment, collaboration, and caring provides a strong foundation for its continuous improvement process. Because of stakeholders' positive relationships with each other they have been able to collectively identify goals and plans that focus on the district goals. In order to support schools in their individual school improvement work, the District School Improvement Team (DSIT) meets once a year for schools to present their school improvement plans to each other. This process has evolved over recent years into a collaborative sharing of ideas and resources which improves practice at all schools. Observation of DSIT presentations indicated that school improvement teams (SIT) are becoming more cohesive, more focused on data, and more reflective about their practice. Another major outgrowth of this process is the willingness of school staffs to share with each other in a non-competitive manner. Rather than competition among schools, there is a spirit of collaboration and support. Such an attitude does much to foster systematic improvement.

Northville's Administrative Team (superintendent, principals, and central office staff) meets twice a month. One meeting is devoted to professional learning related to guiding the continuous improvement process. The team's most recent focus for learning is "understanding how to embed data driven decision making and intervention programs for at-risk learners into individual school improvement efforts." It was evident that the results of these meetings have directly impacted the content and direction of the school improvement plans.

School improvement teams (SIT) at the building level include representatives from all stakeholder groups – administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, and students. School improvement plans must align with the district’s overarching goal of improving student achievement. Buildings have the flexibility to use the school improvement planning format of choice. One limitation of this approach is that such flexibility may inhibit efforts for continuous improvement if critical components of an effective planning process are missing in a school’s plan (i.e. formative and summative assessments, quality assurance/program evaluation).

Collegial time is available at each level (i.e., elementary, middle school and high school) to engage in professional learning communities (PLC) that focus on improving student learning. Observations and interviews indicate that this time for all grades/departments could be more systematically used to answer the four guiding questions that are required to be answered in every school improvement plan: *What is it we expect learners to learn/be able to do? How will we know if they have learned it? How will we respond if they have not? How will we respond if they already learned it?*

The district leadership has involved teaching staff in updating their curriculum to match recent changes in Michigan’s grade level content expectations (grades K – 8), high school content expectations, and rigorous new high school graduation requirements. This has been a challenging task for every district in the state. As a part of this process, pacing guides and common assessments (defined as semester exams) are nearing completion. Further development of formative common assessments will enhance the district’s assessment system particularly in core content areas. Additionally, systematic use of CLASS A, a data management system, will allow schools to monitor and adjust curriculum, instruction, and interventions as well as evaluate the effectiveness of school improvement plans.

Review of professional development plans and interviews indicate that now more than ever professional development has been aligned with the district and school improvement work. Teachers expressed satisfaction with their ability to influence the direction of professional development opportunities and programs.

The district publishes an Annual Report available to all stakeholders in print and electronically outlining the district’s and schools’ continuous improvement plans and results. The Annual Report is one more example of how the Northville Public Schools communicates its successes and involves stakeholders in the continuous improvement process.

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

- There is a collective focus at all levels of the district on maintaining high levels of achievement as measured by state tests. Additionally, there is a focus on providing interventions for students at risk who may not be able to achieve grade level/high school content expectations.
- There is outstanding leadership at all levels and in all departments in the district with a high level of commitment to the goal of high achievement for all students.
- The District School Improvement Team is an invaluable process to support Northville’s continuous improvement process. This structure allows schools to come together to share their approach to school improvement, and is a venue where staffs engage in professional learning and sharing of resources related to the district’s overarching goal of improving student achievement.
- One of the two monthly administrative leadership team meetings functions as a PLC for principals. Most recent discussions at these meetings focused on increasing data driven decision making and providing tiers of interventions to support at-risk learners. These two focus topics from the principal PLC were evident in the most recent DSIT school presentations, and reinforce the importance of principals engaging in instructional leadership activities.
- The district values and uses input from all stakeholders to develop and carry out its continuous

improvement process.

- There is a collaborative culture in the district and in the schools that provides the basis for effective professional learning and planning for continuous improvement.

**Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement - The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:**

- Investigate the use of Michigan's new school improvement plan template available on the AdvancED website for district and school improvement plans. Use of this format will achieve the following: fulfill the state's requirement to post school improvement plans by September 1, 2010; fulfill Public Act 25, Title I and accreditation requirements; and, provide a template for schools that defines and addresses all the critical components of an effective school improvement plan/process. Those components include: long range goals; SMART objectives; strategies and activities to achieve the goals and objectives; timelines; persons responsible for implementation; assessment for progress monitoring; and evaluation components for quality assurance purposes. Use of a unified planning tool will increase the likelihood that all students will maintain gains and that Northville will close the achievement gap for at-risk learners.
- Continue to work towards full implementation/use of CLASS A to support data-driven decision making for continuous improvement.
- Explore the creation of formative assessments for K – 12 core content areas in order to help administrators and staff more closely monitor and adjust instruction for all students. Work with staff to ensure quality of common assessments, and establish proficiency levels for common assessments so that teachers can determine more clearly how they will respond to the data.
- Consider developing a comprehensive evaluation plan to determine effectiveness of strategies, interventions, activities and programs.

**Finding:** Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of "Operational", indicating that the Northville Public Schools has met the accreditation requirements for the "Commitment to Continuous Improvement" standard.

## Quality Assurance Findings

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

### Description

The Northville Public Schools has a number of methods it uses to monitor results and assure quality. The AdvancED District Accreditation process provided the district with an opportunity to self assess their progress against the seven AdvancED standards and to involve a variety of stakeholders in this work. Although the District Standards Assessment Report was developed by a writing team, there were a number of opportunities for additional stakeholders to provide input and to corroborate the findings in the initial assessment. As a result, Northville Public Schools produced a comprehensive overview of its district that clearly demonstrated the connections to the expectations of the district accreditation process. At the same time, district leadership required school leaders to review the seven AdvancED standards to determine their progress in meeting them. This approach contributes to a high level of alignment between the central office and the schools and ensures quality assurance at all levels.

The development of an overarching goal – student learning – was established in 2007 by the Board of Education and district leaders. In identifying this goal, the district committed to supporting “student learning as the ongoing, overarching goal that influences decision-making in every other area from budgeting, to programming, to staffing.” This clear focus and direction has established parameters for the Northville Public Schools and is an excellent example of quality assurance throughout the district.

Continuous improvement efforts in the district are aligned with the overarching goal. Each year the district establishes certain goals connected to student learning and each school develops an improvement plan that supports district initiatives and goals. The District School Improvement Team process is an excellent vehicle for monitoring and documenting improvement on a regular basis. School improvement teams share their progress each year and seek feedback from their colleagues in annual meetings that include teachers, parents, administrators, and in some cases, students. Both verbal and written feedback is provided.

The superintendent meets annually with each principal to discuss his/her progress over the year. According to one principal, the expectations are high to provide clear data and analysis regarding student performance. However, this principal also commented that this annual evaluation session is designed to share successes and accomplishments as well as future areas for focus. Based on interviews with principals, the superintendent can be credited with establishing an evaluation system that focuses on constructive and encouraging feedback in an atmosphere of trust and respect. This method of administering supports high performance and accountability from all members of the school community.

It would be remiss not to recognize the budgetary concerns that are on the horizon for the Northville Public Schools. There is concern regarding Michigan’s economic outlook and the impact it may have on the state’s schools. The Northville Public Schools has aggressively initiated problem-solving approaches regarding future revenue losses. The district has involved its stakeholders through community forums and has shared information as it becomes available. The district has also thought through possible scenarios if its budget is to be significantly cut, and presented a variety of options to both internal and external stakeholders. Maintaining the level of quality and excellence that Northville citizens have come to expect will be a challenging expectation if available

resources are reduced.

## **Strengths**

- The superintendent provides outstanding leadership to the district and is well respected for the culture he has helped to create. As a result, excellence is the mantra of the Northville Public Schools and stakeholders are assured of excellent educational opportunities in the community of Northville.
- The superintendent and his staff have provided clear direction regarding expectations for continuous improvement and excellence. By clearly articulating these expectations, there is a focus on student learning and accountability throughout the system.
- The school board and the district leadership have established clear policies, procedures, protocols, and processes for the Northville Public Schools. These expectations have been clearly communicated and shared, thus ensuring quality assurance throughout the system in terms of management and organizational effectiveness.
- In the Northville Public Schools, community/stakeholder involvement is synonymous with quality assurance. Stakeholders expect excellence – thus ensuring a continuing focus on excellence.

## **Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement**

- There is a high level of respect and appreciation for the superintendent and his central office staff . The Quality Assurance Review team suggests that these persons take the initiative in bringing together a variety of stakeholders to discuss the commendations and recommendations in the Quality Assurance Review report. This approach will support the culture of stakeholder involvement in the Northville Public Schools and will provide opportunities for stakeholders to suggest or support strategies designed to promote continuous improvement and excellence in the community of Northville.
- As QAR team members reviewed school improvement plans, a variety of templates was noted. While school based staffs may appreciate the flexibility of designing their own school improvement formats, the QAR team suggests that school staffs write goals that are measurable and actionable, and that staff identify a variety of measurements for determining progress and results. These expectations will support system-wide clarity and direction for Northville’s continuous improvement efforts.

## Conclusion

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

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

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

# Appendix

## Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Dr. Sharon Steindam, Chair (AdvancED)
- Dr. Janice Colliton, Vice Chair (NCA CASI Michigan)
- Deb Haptonstall, Team Member (Ohio State Department of Education)
- Ms. Donna Davis, Team Member (USD 308)
- Dr. Kristin Gekiere, Team Member (Farmington Public Schools)
- Mr. Mark Wilson, Team Member (Farmington Public School District)
- Monique Beels, Team Member (Novi Community Schools)
- Dr. Vicki DeMao, Team Member (Centerville-Abington Community Sch)

## AdvancED Standards for Quality School Systems

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

### **Vision and Purpose**

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

### **Governance and Leadership**

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

### **Teaching and Learning**

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

### **Documenting and Using Results**

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

### **Resource and Support Systems**

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

### **Stakeholder Communications and Relationships**

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

**Commitment to Continuous Improvement**

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