

**Report of the  
Quality Assurance Review Team  
for  
Lamar County High School  
8990 Highway 18 West  
Vernon, Alabama, United States 35592**

**Mr. Vance Herron, Principal**

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**Review Dates: 02/28/2012 - 02/29/2012**



*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

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## About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

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

In 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 Alabama State Office (SACS-CASI-AL), a division of AdvancED, visited the Lamar County High School in Vernon, Alabama, United States on 02/28/2012 - 02/29/2012.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 2 members of the administrative team, 27 students, 9 parents, and 33 teachers. 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 Quality Assurance Review (QAR) team commends the administration, faculty, and staff of Lamar County High-Vernon Intermediate School for their dedication and teamwork in creating and implementing all phases of the school's program.

Evidence:

Interviews conducted with the faculty, with parents, and with students indicated a high level of cooperation and dedication among the professional and paraprofessional staff of the school. In gathering information about the seven accreditation standards, the QAR team interviewed 33 faculty and 2 administrators. All of those

interviewed demonstrated a high degree of dedication to the task of creating a positive school environment and quality educational programs to serve the needs of all of the school's students.

**Rationale:**

Creating a cooperative environment and effective school culture takes time and effort. The relationships and attitudes displayed by everyone interviewed indicate that a positive school climate and culture are valued. The cooperative attitudes displayed by the faculty and staff indicate that the creation of a positive work environment is addressed on a daily basis. This kind of school atmosphere contributes to quality educational experiences for all students.

**Commendation 2**

**Commendation Statement:**

The recent completion of curriculum pacing guides in the four core academic areas has had a positive impact on the school's faculty and on the school's overall program.

**Evidence:**

Interviews with faculty and staff indicated that the writing and implementing of the pacing guides in Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science has resulted in a better definition of what students are to be taught and when it is to be taught. This has resulted in a more coherent delivery of the core curriculum to all students and in improved opportunities for remediation through the Response To Intervention (RTI) program.

**Rationale:**

The teachers seemed to have a high degree of confidence in their ability to plan and deliver the curriculum to all students. The pacing guides appear to have given the faculty a focal point for discussions regarding what students are learning and places where improvements can be made.

## 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:**

Devise plans to create minimum levels of school-wide staff development that are specifically linked to the areas of improvement in student learning identified in the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP). In addition, appropriate staff development for paraprofessionals should be provided.

**Evidence:**

The QAR team learned through interviews with faculty and staff that the school system and the school provide a good array of professional development activities for professional staff. But, very little or no staff development is provided for paraprofessional personnel. The only education and training provided for teacher aides (and there are several of these, especially serving special education students) comes through the efforts of individual

teachers. In addition, each year the school CIP identifies several areas of needed improvement in student learning. QAR team interviews revealed that there is very little school-wide staff development required of all professional staff that is designed to specifically address those areas of deficient learning identified in the CIP.

**Rationale:**

If the school identifies an area of student learning that needs improvement, it makes sense to provide all teachers with training and experiences geared toward making them better educated and prepared to teach regarding that area of student learning. This is not to say that such school-wide staff development should comprise the entire program. It is to say that appropriate levels of staff development for all professional personnel should be required in those high priority areas of student learning targeted for improvement in the CIP.

The paraprofessional staff provide a large array of services for students and professional staff. If appropriate staff development activities are identified and delivered to the paraprofessional staff, the valuable contributions of these personnel will be greatly enhanced.

**Required Action 2**

**Required Action:**

Collect, analyze, and use student learning data on a more regularly scheduled basis.

**Evidence:**

Interviews with the administration and faculty revealed that the school creates a profile of various types of data, but that most of this information comes from the mandated state testing program. Some of the data are generated only once each year or at most 3 or 4 times per year. Thus, there are often long periods of time when the faculty is teaching for improved student learning with little or no recent data as to their success --- or lack of it.

**Rationale:**

The AdvancED Continuous Improvement model (Standard 7) requires that schools regularly update their profile of data and use results of implementing the school's improvement plan to devise strategies for future actions. The QAR team feels that more frequent collection, analysis, and use of student learning data will enable the faculty and staff to better plan their teaching activities.

**Required Action 3**

**Required Action:**

Collaborate with the Lamar County Board of Education, the Central Office staff, parents, the broader school community, and other stakeholders to make more widely known the financial needs of the school.

**Evidence:**

The educational programs of the school are funded at the minimum level provided by the Alabama State Board of Education. Said another way, there is very little local financial support for the school. Because of decreases in state funding over the past several years, the school is lacking in a number of areas. For the last 3 years, the school has had no library enhancement funds, no funds to upgrade technology, and no money for textbooks. In addition, the number of school administrators, guidance counselors, and library/media personnel is at the minimum level required by accreditation standards and policies. Interviews with parents/stakeholders revealed that, outside of the professional staff, the serious financial deficiencies of the school are not well known.

**Rationale:**

Creative use of school-based funds, use of Federal Title I funds, and funds from parent and community based support groups have helped, to a degree, with the under-funding problem. But, such activities can only assist for so long. The school needs to make its financial situation known to all of its stakeholders, and it needs to begin to discuss possible solutions. The school's Vision and Mission require it to provide exemplary educational programs – not just minimum level programs. The needs of the school should be made known to all of its stakeholders and possible solutions to those needs should be explored.

**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-AL accreditation seals are available at [www.advanced.org/communicationskit](http://www.advanced.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 Lamar County High School demonstrates that it meets the seven standards for accreditation. The findings of the Quality Assurance Review Team regarding the standards for accreditation are summarized on the following pages.

## Standard 1: Vision and Purpose

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

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

The school, after collaboration with its stakeholders, decided to retain the mission statement that was established in 2007. The belief emerged that the mission statement had been a continuous support as it enhanced the educational direction of the school. The mission of Lamar County High-Intermediate School is to educate individuals and prepare them to achieve their highest level of independence and productivity in society. The mission can be found on the website and throughout the school in various classrooms and offices. Staff members develop goals from the mission statement to establish expectations in the classroom. The staff uses indicators in the school's data profile to determine the extent to which the mission has been realized.

The school has formulated a formal vision statement and a set of belief statements. The beliefs establish the fact that all children can learn. They involve students being actively engaged and they encourage teachers to incorporate technology into their lessons. They address the importance of the school's remediation program called Response to Intervention (RTI) and the need for a safe and physically comfortable environment. Lessons are developed with the vision and beliefs in mind. Finally, the beliefs communicate that it is the responsibility of all stakeholders to advance the school's mission.

Evidence was found that the faculty is incorporating the mission statement and beliefs by encouraging students to be successful and by embracing technology changes as they are established.

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

- The mission statement is short and concise and addresses a common goal among the faculty and staff. It can be found on the school website and throughout the campus.
- The profile is continuously maintained and outlined annually in the school's Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP).
- Instructional strategies and learning opportunities are developed using the vision and beliefs.

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

- Review the vision, mission statement, and beliefs at regular intervals to determine their continuing validity.
- Monitor students in RTI classes and engage them in activities that will increase their skills.
- Publicize on a regular basis, the mission, vision, and belief statements with the school's students and

stakeholders. These groups are less likely to remember this important information than the school's faculty, staff, and administration.

**Finding:** Lamar County High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" 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 Lamar County High-Intermediate School strives to follow a specific set of policies and procedures in order to ensure that the school runs smoothly. Policy and procedure documents at both the school board and the local school level are well-written. School programs are aligned with appropriate accountability systems. Reports are completed in a timely fashion by qualified personnel. School leaders are encouraged to make school operational decisions regarding the implementation of policies.

The school's Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) Committee analyzes data generated through the State of Alabama mandated student testing program and distributes it to all professional staff. Data are used in planning student learning experiences. However, the school profile could be updated on a more frequent basis. Professional staff are provided with a variety of opportunities to enhance their professional knowledge. Staff development, however, is not consistently linked to student learning needs identified in the CIP (see Required Actions). Responsibility for student discipline is shared among staff members. Interviews revealed an excellent working relationship among administrators and staff. Interviews provided information that parents/stakeholders have opportunities to participate in the school on a number of levels. However, the number and variety of stakeholders who participate should be expanded.

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

- Teachers serve in leadership roles and provide opportunities for the students to lead.
- The organizational aspects of the school are well-grounded and provide opportunities for faculty to interact in many positive ways.

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

- Establish a regularly scheduled time that will allow the staff to collaborate regarding collecting, analyzing, and using student learning data.
- Provide professional development for paraprofessionals that will enable them to do their job more safely and more effectively.
- Provide professional development for all members of the faculty that is more closely related to the CIP identified areas of deficiency in student learning.
- Create and promote plans to reach and involve a higher percentage of stakeholders, particularly parents, in the day-in, day-out life of the school.

**Finding:** Lamar County High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this

standard for accreditation.

## Standard 3: Teaching and Learning

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

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

The QAR team toured the school, interviewed teachers, support staff, students, parents and other stakeholders, and examined artifacts to attain information about the instructional programs and learning growth of students. The school promotes clear expectations for student learning based on research-based standards and learning expectations articulated in the Alabama Course of Study in each academic area, the Alabama High School Graduation Examination (AHSGE), the Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test (ARMT), and the Alabama Mathematics, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI). The school uses a county-wide curriculum or pacing guide for the four core areas.

The school's instructional program is very basic. Elective courses are limited. There is a very popular area of music education classes available for students as low as the sixth grade. There are no electives such as art or drama. The school does have an agri-business program and students can elect to attend the school system's vocational school. No advanced level courses are taught. However, the school does have equipment to utilize the State's distance learning program called ACCESS.

Student learning data are collected and analyzed at the beginning of the year so that interventions may be done through the school's Positive Support Team. The school normally runs an instructional day comprised of 7 instructional periods. An additional period has been added in the middle of the morning which is called the RTI (Response To Intervention) period. During this period students who have academic deficiencies are required to attend a class specifically designed for remediation of their learning deficiencies. Students who are not in need of remediation have the opportunity to attend a variety of faculty created enrichment classes. Students in remediation classes are motivated to remove their deficiencies (demonstrated by regularly scheduled tests) and join enrichment classes. Interviews with faculty and students indicated that the RTI period is working very well.

The teacher-student relationship seems to be one of caring and respect. The QAR team noted that the school is clean, the atmosphere is friendly, and the school is viewed as a safe place in which to learn. The school has safety plans and procedures in place for emergency situations.

The overall school climate is positive. Academic programs, though minimal in nature, are sound and appear to be achieving acceptable results. Lack of making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is apparently due to lack of success by a few subgroups of students and the overall graduation rate. This is being addressed through the use of instruction provided by the school's RIT schedule. In spite of a severe lack of funding over the past few years, the school's media and technology programs are adequate and appear to be doing an acceptable job in the school's overall academic program.

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

- Pacing Guides are embraced by the faculty and appear to be providing much needed structure in planning and delivering instruction in the 4 core academic areas.

- The Lamar County School of Technology provides a number of vocational programs that appear to be an asset to the school.
- Teachers and administrators are doing a good job of promoting student achievement through the activities of the RTI period.

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

- Promote among students, parents, and the broader stakeholder group the advanced classes and other elective classes that are available to students through the State of Alabama ACCESS distance learning programs.
- Plan and implement more coherent learning experiences for ELL students that will provide them with enhanced assistance in their attempts to become better academic and social citizens of the school.

**Finding:** Lamar County High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

## Standard 4: Documenting and Using Results

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

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

The QAR team interviewed the faculty and examined student data and documents related to improving teaching and learning. The team found that the administration and teachers set attainable student learning goals. This is based on analysis of data generated from the Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE), the Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing (ADAW), the Alabama Reading and Math Test (ARMT), Stanford 10 (SAT-10), and the Alabama Alternative Assessment (AAA). Students did not meet the AYP requirement because of the graduation rate.

The QAR team found that some subgroups show improvement but, across the four core areas, there is a need for better utilization of data. A regularly scheduled time should be provided for teachers to meet, discuss, and analyze student data. This planning time would make it possible for teachers to develop coherent plans for teaching strategies aimed at specific areas of student learning deficiency.

Parent interviews indicated a need for communication between stakeholders and the school about student progress in learning and about other issues such as advanced courses and electives available through the ACCESS program. Some means of communication used are Parent-Teacher Conference Day, AMSTI Night, and athletic and band booster clubs. The local newspaper does a good job of publicizing the success of the students.

The school has the normal student data record-keeping system that is safe and secure. Progress reports and report cards are sent home on a regular basis. With the implementation of the I-NOW Home Portal (an Internet access to student information and school related information) next year, the lines of communication should be improved.

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

- AMSTI night helped in communication with parents.
- The administrators have limited the number of interruptions during instructional time.
- The RTI period is used for both enrichment and remediation. Once a student has passed the AHSGE, he is moved to an enrichment class.

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

- Schedule time, on a regular basis, for teachers to meet to review and analyze student learning data, and to plan procedures to generate new data as needed.
- Communicate to students, parents, and other stakeholders information about the offerings of the school. This information should include electives, advanced courses, and distance learning opportunities such as those provided by the ACCESS network.

**Finding:** Lamar County High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

## Standard 5: Resource and Support Systems

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

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

The school's faculty are appropriately certified, highly qualified, and assigned to teaching duties. There is an excellent rapport between members of the professional and paraprofessional staff and the school's administrators. The overall school climate is one of cooperation and positive mutual support.

The lack of local financial support of the school is evident in the number and types of staff. The principal and assistant principal are, for all practical purposes, responsible for two schools: the grade 4 through 8 intermediate school and the grade 9 through 12 high school. Guidance services are provided by a full-time person and by one person working half-time. The same staffing level is true for the library media centers. The number of faculty is sufficient to offer the minimum level of instruction mandated by the State of Alabama. There are few electives and no advanced classes are offered. If there is growth in the size of the student body, additions to staffing at all levels will be necessary.

The professional development programs available for professional staff are varied and offer individuals a variety of options for growth. However, interviews conducted by the QAR team and artifacts examined revealed little school-wide staff development for all teachers that is tied to the CIP and school-wide student learning deficiencies. In short, teachers are allowed to select what they want from the buffet of staff development choices.

Staff development for paraprofessionals does not exist in an organized manner. Education and training for paraprofessionals is left to the professionals to whom they are assigned. This results in non-uniform experiences at best, and no training at its worst.

School financial records are regularly audited. The school has written security and crisis management plans. Emergency drills are conducted regularly for potential occurrences such as severe weather, fire, and other emergencies. The buildings are relatively new and well-maintained and are inspected for safety concerns at appropriate intervals.

Guidance services, though understaffed, appear to be adequate. Provision of services for special needs children are a priority and appear to be adequately staffed and appropriate in scope to meet the needs of clients. Special education teachers and regular classroom teachers appear to work well in meeting the needs of students with special needs.

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

- The professional and paraprofessional staff and the school's administrators work well together to provide a quality school experience for the students. The degree of cooperation and dedication exhibited is noteworthy (see Commendations).

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

- Communicate to parents, stakeholders, and the broader community the financial status of the school and the needs of the school for additional personnel and funding for all aspects of the school's program (see Required Actions).

**Finding:** Lamar County High School 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:**

Stakeholder communication and relationships at Lamar County High-Vernon Intermediate School are typical for smaller, more rural schools. There is good interaction between the school and parents/stakeholders up to a point. The parents and community members who are active in the school, who support the school, and who take a continuous interest in the school represent a small, dedicated group of individuals. These are the people who have successful students who present few problems to the school. The parents that need to be participating in school related events and need to be more active in the lives of their children are largely absent. This non-participant group represents the majority of the school's parents.

The school makes a genuine effort to communicate with and inform stakeholders, particularly parents. The school attempts to have open channels of communication with all stakeholders. The school attempts to engage stakeholders, provide relevant school information, and solicit stakeholder involvement. The school is successful in this work with some stakeholders and not successful at all with others.

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

- The school has an active, dedicated group of parents and community members who attempt to work

with and assist the school.

- The school attempts to engage and inform stakeholders through the usual means of the Parent Teacher Organization, the local newspaper, parent booster clubs, beginning of the school year documents that are sent home, and report cards.

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

- Research different methods to communicate with and attempt to engage parents and stakeholders who do not at the present time take any interest in the school or the education of its students (see Required Actions relative to making known the financial needs of the school). The best advice for reaching these "absent" parents and stakeholders is to "think outside of the box" and try new techniques in an attempt to discover methods that work better than current efforts.

**Finding:** Lamar County High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

## Standard 7: Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

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

Interviews with a wide variety of individuals and review of artifacts clearly demonstrate that Lamar County High-Vernon Intermediate School engages in the components of the AdvancEd Continuous Planning Process: Vision, Profile, Plan, and Results. The school has a well articulated Mission Statement and set of Belief Statements. These appear to be appropriate for the school and its stakeholders. They appear to guide the efforts of school planning and improvement as well as the daily tasks of engaging students in a rigorous program of teaching and learning. The school annually creates a profile of data regarding a variety of school characteristics. The school annually creates a school-wide Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) and implements the plan throughout the school year. The school periodically analyzes the results of the CIP and adjusts the profile and the plan of action. In implementing the Continuous Planning Process the school attempts to engage and inform stakeholders. In short, the school appears to be at the operational level in the improvement process.

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

- As stated elsewhere in this report, the school's staff (both professionals and paraprofessionals) appears to work together well and exhibits a high level of cooperation in attempts to create and implement a quality education program for all students.
- The implementation of the RTI period in the daily school schedule grew out of the Continuous Planning Process and attempts to bring all students up to minimum learning expectations and, at the same, time provide enrichment learning for those students who were not in need of extra assistance. This appears to be a successful development in the school's program of instruction.

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



- Improve engagement of and communication with stakeholders regarding the school and all facets of its program (see Required Actions).
- Address the need to tie some aspects of staff development for all faculty to the major areas of student learning deficiency that are identified in the school's CIP (see Required Actions).

**Finding:** Lamar County High School 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-AL accreditation with AdvancED.

# Appendix

## Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Dr. Ronnie L. Stanford, Chair/Lead Evaluator
- Ms. Frances Butler, Team Member (Fayette County High School)
- Mrs. Lynda S. Hall, Team Member (Hamilton Elementary School)

## AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

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