

*Rec. for Full Accreditation  
without exception*

*Wendy*

Center Grove Elementary School

## Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the NCA CASI Indiana State Office (NCA-CASI-IN), a division of AdvancED, visited the Center Grove Elementary School in Greenwood, Indiana, United States on 09/20/2010 - 09/21/2010.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 4 members of the administrative team, 10 students, 16 parents, and 33 teachers. In addition, Cafeteria Workers and Custodians, Teaching Assistants and School Board Members were interviewed. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the school. Specifically, the team examined the school's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

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

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

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

### Commendations

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

1. • Ongoing student progress monitoring has been established.

The progress monitoring has impacted instructional decision-making and practices. Collaboration among staff allows students to receive remediation services as well as enrichment opportunities.

Meaningful modifications of instruction lead to student success.

2. • Shared leadership empowers all stakeholders in the decision-making process.

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The stakeholders feel encouraged, supported and validated by the accessibility and the disposition of the principal. The culture of trust and appreciation encourages and motivates stakeholders to achieve their personal best.

A positive learning culture and climate are vital to the success of the school.

3. • **The school has implemented a school-wide positive behavior plan.**

In anticipation of a state mandate, the school developed a positive behavior plan which all stakeholders have enthusiastically embraced. Many students have already earned the first level of recognition. Students stated that the new plan is different because it focuses on students who are doing the right thing instead of those who misbehave. Teachers have noticed students encouraging each other in positive ways.

School climate and learning is impacted positively when acts of kindness and good deeds are rewarded by all stakeholders.

## 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.

- **Include parent and community members in all aspects of the school improvement process.**

Active parental and community involvement in the continual improvement process was not evident.

Collaboration among stakeholders is essential for student success and school accountability.

**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.

### **Resources**

AdvancED offers a range of resources to support your school as it acts on the findings in this report. The AdvancED Resource Network, available at [www.advanc-ed.org/resourcenetwork](http://www.advanc-ed.org/resourcenetwork), provides an online network of peer-to-peer practices, best practices, and resources and tools designed to help schools with their improvement efforts. Available any where, any time, the network can be queried for information on a variety of school improvement subjects. The AdvancED Research and Development division provides research, handbooks, and tools to assist schools with continuous improvement. In addition, your state office provides hands-on professional development and ongoing technical assistance. Contact your state office for more information on the range of resources available to you.

### **Celebrating Accreditation**

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

### **Summary**

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

## Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

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

### Standard 1. Vision and Purpose

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

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

The teachers, staff, parents, community members, and students at Center Grove Elementary School are united in their vision of creating "An awesome place to learn and grow." The QAR team, through interviews, observations and perusal of artifacts found evidence of a highly collaborative learning environment. The leadership of the school encourages teamwork through an annual staff retreat. A staff member states, "We share with each other. We are always looking for what works." The school is centered around student success, and all stakeholders participate in achieving the mission.

While not all stakeholders were able to articulate the specific school goal to enhance the vision, they were sincere in their desire for success for all learners. The mission statement was recently revised with staff input, but there is no evidence of parental and stakeholder involvement in that revision.

The unstated but overarching vision felt by the school is that creating an excellent and supportive climate allows good learning to take place. The QAR team perceived that although the vision is shared and apparent to all, documentation of that vision is not evident in the School Improvement Plan.

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

- The annual staff retreat unites, focuses, and energizes the staff at the beginning of the school year.
- A culture of collaboration and a sense of a common purpose exist among the leadership, staff, and parents.
- The school is student-centered and focused on student success.

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

- Increase the awareness of the school goal to all stakeholders.
- Engage all stakeholders in the creation and documentation of the school goal.
- Engage all stakeholders in the creation and documentation of the vision, mission, and belief statements.
- Align the School Improvement Plan to reflect actual vision, current data, and practices.

**Finding:** Center Grove Elementary 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 school principal empowers most stakeholders to participate in the leadership and the governance of the school and responds to stakeholder requests in the best interest of the students. Staff socialization outside of the school day is encouraged and desired. When a district school was closed, many new students were added to Center Grove Elementary. To help make that transition easier, a social was planned for the adults, including the new parents, old parents, and staff.

An evaluation system is in place which includes both formal and informal assessment. Building policies and expectations are clearly stated.

The team found overwhelming evidence throughout the QAR interviews of the principal's passion for shared decision making. The principal seeks input from stakeholders in the creation of a positive learning culture that incorporates the FISH! philosophy. To quote a Center Grove father of two, "He's a good dude." Staff members feel strongly that the principal is there for the children.

Student progress is monitored regularly and instruction is adjusted when needed. This feedback is shared among the staff for decision-making involving grade level flexible grouping and small instructional groups. In addition to staff, parents volunteer help with tutoring so students may show progress and gains. Successes are celebrated with all stakeholders.

Leadership opportunities are abundantly available at all levels. A wide variety of afterschool activities are provided and monitored by the school. School policies and procedures are clearly articulated in the district policies and the staff and student handbooks. The staff is aware of their changing demographics and are willing to problem-solve to meet that challenge.

Through parent interviews it is evident there is trust in the school staff and support for all endeavors made by the staff. One parent said, "We work hand in hand." Even though parents and community members work along with the staff in the classroom and in fundraising efforts, this group is not regularly a part of the decision-making process on the school improvement team.

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

- Handbooks for students, parent, and teachers are comprehensive.
- The principal is a distributive leader, allowing for staff leadership and decision-making opportunities.
- At the heart of every decision is what is best for students.
- There are intentional practices, both in and out of the school building, in place to create a positive, energizing, and fun working environment.

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

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- Explore best practices in meeting the needs of a changing student population.
- Include all stakeholders to help with all aspects of the decision-making process on a more regular basis.

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

### Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

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

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

Best practices drive instruction at Center Grove Elementary School. Evidence gathered from student achievement data, interviews, classroom and hallway displays, and curricular maps demonstrates highly successful teaching and learning practices. Interventions and enrichment services are all delivered and modified based on ongoing data reviews.

The curriculum is aligned with Indiana standards as are their assessments for monitoring progress. Mapping of the curriculum is ongoing. High ability students, special education students, English language learners, and speech and communication students receive services to meet their needs.

Scheduling has been adjusted for optimal time on task. The schedule maximizes instructional time and allows for teacher collaboration within the building. On Wednesdays, students are released early to give the staff time to collaborate, plan for instruction, and receive professional development. The staff behaves as a professional learning community, valuing collaboration and onsite professional development. There is limited evidence of collaboration between elementary and middle school staff.

The newly implemented positive behavior support system is widely supported and implemented by all stakeholders and enhances the learning climate. There is a plethora of technology available in each classroom, and there is evidence that it is utilized for instructional purposes. Students are actively engaged in their own learning and progress. A hall bulletin board is dedicated to celebrating student success.

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

- The ARMOR (Attitude, Respectful, Model Safety, On Task, Responsible) program, the positive behavior support system, is well organized and implemented.
- The publicized data wall in the hallway celebrates student growth.
- Weekly early release time provides ongoing professional development and collaboration.
- Flexible grouping for special classes and academic remediation and enrichment provides for the needs of the students.
- Curricular maps provide focus for instruction and assessment.
- An extensive universal screening and progress monitoring system is in place.

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

- Provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations.
- Initiate more extensive articulation and collaboration between the elementary and middle schools.

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

## Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results

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

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

Through the use of a variety of instruments, the school collects a vast amount of student data in a district data mine. The data is collected regularly by the counselor and a staff member dedicated to this job. The data is shared with staff and becomes an integral part of guiding instruction for individual students. Teachers and staff members monitor student progress and adjust their teaching practices to ensure student success.

The QAR team found evidence of this collaboration through interviews with assistants and teachers and classroom observations. Student success is monitored and celebrated through school-wide recognition, hallway displays, announcements, and newsletters. The data board is a tool teachers use to track student achievement but only uses one measure.

ISTEP+ scores consistently are at the 89th percentile and above. Student gains are evidenced by other measures as well, such as AIMSweb and Acuity. It was noted that students are making progress.

By using Skyward, the school maintains their student records in compliance with regulations. The QAR team did not find evidence of trend data between Center Grove Elementary and comparable schools.

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

- The student management system enables the school to maintain student records accurately.
- The hallway student progress bulletin board celebrates student success in an attractive and relative way.
- A data wall, viewed only by staff, has been established as a visual tool for accountability.
- Teachers and assistants use data to reteach and enrich.

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

- Triangulate student achievement data on the data board.
- Incorporate measures that assess higher order thinking skills.
- Compare Center Grove Elementary to comparable schools to monitor progress.

**Finding:** Center Grove Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met

this standard for accreditation.

## Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems

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

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

Extensive resource and support systems are in place for the school. The staff is highly qualified and numerous opportunities are provided for staff development based on the needs of the district, the needs of the school, and the requests of the staff. Staff members serve on a variety of committees based on their desire to serve and their expertise.

The school employs two learning resource teachers and abundant special education assistants that meet IEP (Individual Education Plan) compliance. In addition, assistants are used for kindergarten, RTI (Response to Intervention), and media services. A full time counselor is in place for guidance services. The counselor also works on data tracking and progress monitoring.

Special needs services are in place for special education students, high ability students, English language learners, and students with speech and communication disorders.

Teacher orientation and mentoring opportunities are in place for new teachers. The school is in compliance with accounting systems and maintains a school safety plan. However, the QAR team noted the ease of access for entry into the school.

It was evident to the QAR team that the school and the district have made staffing a top priority. Students have access to a wealth of services. The classroom teachers are given assistants to help implement RTI, tutor children based on their needs, and be another set of eyes to help monitor student progress. The school's leadership team supports teachers by sorting through the data and sharing the results with teachers, allowing teachers to focus on adjusting instruction.

Even though resources have been available to support school endeavors, it was noted by the principal and staff that they will probably have to do more with less in the future.

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

- Mentors and training are provided for new staff.
- Professional development is encouraged and is meaningful.
- The student to staff ratio, including the assistants, is conducive to a highly effective learning environment.

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

- Anticipate creative solutions for decreasing resources.
- Review the school safety plan to be vigilant for the safety of the students.



**Finding:** Center Grove Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

## Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

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

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

Community members and parents are actively involved in the school by providing support services such as small group tutoring, clerical help, and fundraising. Parents and staff value each others' roles in the school and work in tandem to accentuate student opportunities.

Communication between school and home is achieved in many ways through e-mails, phone calls, conferences, newsletters, web updates, and casual interaction. School board meetings are reported in the local newspaper. Parents stated in interviews that they feel communication lines are open.

The QAR Team found that although PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) and Dads' Club officers are considered a part of the school improvement team, they have not been involved since a previous revision of the School Improvement Plan. Even though the school website is updated regularly with school newsletters, the link to the School Improvement Plan is not accessible. The QAR team found it difficult to navigate the school website due to inconsistent navigational tools.

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

- Parents and staff are political advocates for the school.
- Community stakeholders support school fundraising.
- Teachers solicit specific parent talents and utilize them on a daily basis.
- The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is well organized and high functioning.
- Stakeholders value and listen to each other.

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

- Involve parents and stakeholders in more meaningful ways and on a more regular basis on the school improvement team.
- Provide an active link to the School Improvement Plan on the school website.
- Update the school website for ease of access to information.

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

## Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

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

Continuous improvement is apparent in the everyday operations and practices of the school. There is an impetus and desire on the part of all stakeholders to set high standards for personal growth. Successes are shared with the stakeholders.

The improvement plan provides professional development to achieve the school goal. The QAR team discovered a lack of awareness among the stakeholders concerning the distinction between the district goal and the school goal.

The mission and belief statements have been recently updated. The vision of the school is apparent in the school as evidenced by staff and parent interviews and the school motto is posted in the building. All stakeholders know they want their school to be an "awesome place to grow and learn," but that vision is not articulated in the School Improvement Plan. A lack of current data in the plan was evident as well. Parents and stakeholders were not involved in the recent school improvement revision.

Even though there is an obvious commitment to school improvement, the monitoring of the plan was left largely to the principal. Little evidence was found that all stakeholders are involved.

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

- The school provides professional development as an integral part of the school improvement process.
- The school does a commendable job celebrating success.

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

- Keep current data embedded in the school improvement plan.
- Embed the school's vision in the school improvement plan.
- Ensure that the school improvement plan reflects actual and current practices.
- Include all stakeholders in the plan for school improvement.

**Finding:** Center Grove Elementary 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 NCA-CASI-IN accreditation with AdvancED.

## Appendix

### Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Mrs. Linda Steppe, Chair (Dixie Bee Elementary School)
- Mr. Steven Livingston, Vice Chair (Cloverdale Community School Corp)
- Ms. Paulette Bannec, Team Member (Pleasant Lake Elementary)
- Ms. Jennifer Stolarz, Team Member (Jerry Ross Elementary School)
- Mr. Chris Marshall, Team Member (Crothersville 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.