

**Report of the
Quality Assurance Review Team
for
Mohammed Schools of Atlanta**

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North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) are accreditation divisions of AdvancED.

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 at the state level and by the national 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 Georgia State Office (SACS-CASI-GA), a division of AdvancED, visited the Mohammed Schools of Atlanta in Atlanta, US-GA, US on 03/10/2010 - 03/11/2010.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 9 members of the administrative team, 28 students, 14 parents, and 8 teachers. In addition, 7 Support Staff 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.

- **The Mohammed Schools of Atlanta communicate, demonstrate, and embrace with passion and dedication their shared vision and mission which are highly visible throughout the schools.**

Artifacts such as staff meeting planning session notes and survey results as well as testimonies from teachers, students, parents, and community representatives verified that stakeholders actively support the schools' vision and mission.

With the continued focus, support, and involvement of stakeholders, the Mohammed Schools live their vision and mission.

- **Developing measurable school-wide goals and objectives for student learning in four priority areas for 2010-2015 provides schools with a clear focus for improving student performance.**

The School Improvement Plan verifies that schools have developed measurable school-wide goals and objectives for student learning in four priority areas for 2010-2015 with a clear focus for improving student performance.

School improvement planning that focuses on promoting instructional effectiveness and student learning supports productive change and continuous progress.

- **Collaboration among stakeholders promotes a strong commitment to religious principles that vastly support the schools' vision and mission and provides a nurturing and supportive learning environment with high expectations for student academic performance.**

Through a composite of artifacts, interviews, and observations, the team confirmed the collaborative relationships among stakeholders. Further, staff have posted their vision and mission throughout the schools. Stakeholders shared information during interviews that explained expectations of the Islamic faith and its impact on their daily living. Displays of student academic work and artwork in classrooms and hallways illustrated their adherence to religious principles and value of learning that promote student excellence in both their behavior and academic performance.

The daily focus on principles of the Islamic faith reiterates the goals and expectations of schools and promotes continuous opportunities for improvement and growth for individual staff and students.

- **Staff used data to develop a five-year school improvement plan with four major areas of concentration including increasing student literacy, improving mathematics performance, enhancing character development, and expanding use of technology.**

The team noted that the continuous use of data has allowed staff to develop a viable School Improvement Plan spanning the next five years. A review of the plan verified that the document identifies measurable goals and objectives with action steps, resources, and timelines for improving student achievement.

The School Improvement Plan provides specific measurable goals and objectives to guide teacher development and instruction based on students' needs using assessment data and stakeholder surveys.

- **The schools access resources in a local public school district to pursue relevant professional development focusing on the knowledge and skills needed to deliver high-quality instruction to increase student achievement.**

Staff interviews were filled with discussions that focused on learning opportunities through a local public school district. Artifacts reviewed by the team displayed other professional development opportunities in which staff participated. The School Improvement Plan 2010-2015 references professional development by teachers who will participate in monthly study groups on multiple reading comprehensive strategies across all content areas. During interviews with stakeholders, they communicated in a harmonized voice about the development of staff through progressive education.

Student success is directly related to the development and advancement of school staff. By developing lines of communication and networking with a nearby public school district, the Mohammed Schools have enriched the staff's professional growth to improve student learning.

- **Staff disaggregate standardized assessment data to guide instruction to increase student achievement.**

The schools use the School Improvement Plan 2010-2015 to guide instructional practices based on student achievement data from multiple sources. During stakeholder interviews, interviewees made reference to the staff's compilation and analysis of multiple data sources to drive instruction. Data displays verified that the schools monitor student achievement for continuous improvement.

Using student data to guide instruction allows the schools to create learning opportunities for student success.

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.

- **Develop a connection between the evaluation system and professional growth of staff by analyzing and using student performance data to identify specific training for individual teachers focused on the knowledge and skills needed to deliver high-quality instruction aligned with the schools' goals for improvement.**

Interviews revealed that the schools sustain support for professional learning by providing numerous opportunities for staff to participate in courses, workshops, and other sessions using resources such as a local public school district and redelivery of information. Also, the team noted that staff view professional learning experiences as an essential aspect of their preparation to promote student learning. However, there was no evidence that the schools have linked staff evaluation, professional growth, and the schools' goals for improvement.

By participating in professional learning determined by staff evaluation and student performance data, staff can access quality professional learning programs that permit them to acquire knowledge and skills needed to deliver high-quality instruction aligned with the schools' goals for improvement.

- **Implement a technology instructional plan for each grade with a schedule for students to use existing equipment systematically to achieve technology goals.**

Observations revealed that some technology equipment is available in the computer laboratory and various classrooms. The schools have developed a technology plan that identifies expectations and goals by grade level, and teachers schedule student use by grade level. However, there was not a schedule to provide time for all grades to utilize technology systematically to achieve goals outlined in the technology plan.

Creating a technology plan with a schedule including dates, specific activities, and persons responsible will allow students to meet goals systematically as well as permit staff to service students using current resources.

- **Expand communication with parents and students to provide information about student performance based on test data to permit individual students and their parents to monitor students' progress.**

The school improvement team shared information with the team about the analysis and use of data to drive

instructional decisions; however, the team did not observe in artifacts or note during interviews that the schools have a systemic process for sharing assessment data with parents and students.

Sharing assessment data with individual students and parents will provide an opportunity for them to monitor success in relation to school-wide goals for increasing student achievement.

- **Design a process in the school improvement plan for the systemic evaluation of professional development after implementation to discover its impact on student achievement.**

Through interviews with school staff, the team was unable to elicit details about the impact of professional development on student achievement. In reviewing artifacts and through further questioning of staff, it was apparent to the team that a systematic and consistent plan for evaluating and monitoring the impact of professional development on student achievement was not in place.

The School Improvement Plan 2010-2015 references future professional development for the school staff. Developing a systematic process for planning, evaluating, and monitoring professional development would bring consistency throughout the Mohammed Schools to support school-wide goals for student learning. This process would prescribe protocols to measure the impact of professional development on student learning.

- **Expand the distribution of information about student performance to a broader range of stakeholders in the community.**

Interviews and artifacts revealed that the schools do not market and disseminate information to the broader community. However, stakeholders discussed the schools' aspirations to include a wider range of the area's population among their student body; and they noted issues such as the greater community's limited knowledge about the schools. For example, several stakeholders commented that residents beyond the Islamic community are unaware of the schools.

Disseminating information more widely would permit a broader range of stakeholders to gain knowledge about the schools and their religious and instructional programs. The schools could benefit by expanding their enrollment, spreading the vision and mission of the schools, and building relationships with other potential stakeholders.

- **Assess annual achievement goals within the school improvement plan using benchmarks to periodically review and monitor student progress and adjust achievement goals accordingly.**

The School Improvement Plan has a start date in 2010 but does not indicate specific completion dates for each action step. Also, the Plan does not include provisions for monitoring student progress toward goals. Further, the goal set for mathematics specifies a 30% increase without showing baseline data and expected incremental progress for such a significant gain.

Systematic monitoring of student progress would permit staff to guide instruction more effectively and make necessary changes in a more timely fashion. And, using the School Improvement Plan as a working document will provide direction for the schools' improvement efforts.

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, 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 SACS-CASI-GA accreditation seals are available at www.advanc-ed.org/communicationskit for accredited schools and districts to post on their website and to use in school communications. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and lapel pins are also available and can be ordered from the website to help you share your accomplishment with your community.

Summary

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

Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

The primary requirement for accreditation is that the Mohammed Schools of Atlanta 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 Mohammad Schools of Atlanta have stakeholders who understand clearly and advance unwaveringly their vision and mission. Through interviews and observations, the team readily noted that stakeholders have an extraordinary commitment to the schools' vision and mission that provide direction for their educational program. Stakeholders are ardently dedicated to supporting the schools in various capacities. From information received through interviews, observations, and artifacts, the team determined that many stakeholders have numerous roles depending on the schools' need. In addition, each stakeholder is passionate about service provided in various roles - employee, board member, or other volunteer services.

Further, in addition to stakeholders' inordinate support of the vision and mission, the QAR (Quality Assurance Review) team observed that the schools convey the vision and purpose to their community through an array of sources such as the schools' website, newsletters, and signs posted throughout the schools. The team noted that the vision is not only posted, it is visible in the daily actions of teachers and other staff, students, parents, board members, and other stakeholders. Their actions are apparent during both academic instruction and extracurricular activities. Stakeholders provided specific examples to confirm that the vision and mission are the foundation on which the schools base all of their activities.

To further set a direction for the schools aligned with the vision and purpose, stakeholders have developed a prolific profile that they maintain to provide a basis for identifying school-wide goals for learning. As a component of the School Improvement Plan, the team reviewed the schools' profile which contains specific in-depth information about the schools, their students, and community such as demographic, student performance, and school effectiveness data to guide student learning by revealing areas for improvement to advance the vision. The profile also provides schools with meaningful information about stakeholders' perceptions. Using data to serve as a basis for setting the schools' measurable goals for improvement, the schools have identified among their goals reading comprehension, mathematics, Islamic character development, and technology integration as focal curricular areas for improving student learning.

Strategic planning sessions, forums, grade level staff meetings, Islamic Parents Teachers Students Community Association (IPTSCA) meetings, and parent surveys allow stakeholders to develop and maintain plans for improvement. Stakeholders use data to determine areas in which students are excelling and those areas needing improvement. Notably, stakeholders are involved in the process of creating the schools' improvement plan from data collected during such meetings, along with profile data.

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

- Stakeholders understand clearly and advance unwaveringly the schools' vision and mission to promote student learning and school effectiveness as priorities within the community.
- The Mohammed Schools of Atlanta communicate, demonstrate, and embrace with passion and dedication their shared vision and mission which are highly visible throughout the schools.

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

- Communicate the vision, purpose, improvement initiatives, and student performance results beyond the current reference group to build community relations, understanding, and networks of support for student learning.

Finding: Mohammed Schools of Atlanta has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 2. Governance and Leadership

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

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

The Mohammed Schools of Atlanta have a governing body known as the Consultative Board that meets twice monthly. According to the Standards Assessment Report (SAR), the Majlis, an elected governing body representing the local Muslim community, appoints the nine-member board and hires the schools' director. The Consultative Board develops policies for the operation of the elementary, middle, and high schools. Stakeholders emphasized repeatedly the need to align policies and procedures with the Muslim scripture, the Holy Qur'an, which provides the context for every aspect of the schools' functions.

Among its duties as revealed during interviews, the board approves the annual budget in July for the subsequent school year. The second of its monthly meetings includes an open forum that permits input from community groups such as the Islamic Parents Teachers Students Community Association (IPTSCA). Board members – two of whom are among the schools' alumni – participating in interviews noted that with operational changes, the governing body revises its policies.

The director is responsible for implementing policies as a part of the day-to-day operation of the schools. Interviews with varied groups of stakeholders revealed that the leadership is highly respected by the schools' constituency. The QAR team found that the leadership promotes quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate with a culture of high expectations for staff and students and a consistent focus on teaching and learning in a religious context. Through developing school-wide goals for student learning resulting from a thorough data analysis, the schools have a clear focus for improving student performance. Goals include four priority areas: reading comprehension, mathematics, Islamic character

development, and integrating technology into classroom instruction. Stakeholders defined their four priority areas by completing a thorough data analysis and using the results to guide their decisions.

The leadership and school improvement teams, teachers, support staff, parents, students, and community representatives echoed the sentiment that the schools foster a learning community with its strongest asset being collaboration among stakeholders. According to feedback that the team received during interviews, collaboration among stakeholders supports a culture of collegiality, respect, and trust in addition to enhancing individual effectiveness through inquiry and peer reflection. Further, the administrative team permits the various stakeholder groups to assume leadership roles as tutors, program coordinators, committee chairs, volunteers, and community liaisons. They also have meaningful opportunities to contribute to decision making that promotes a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership.

A major theme of interviews was that staff, students, parents, and other stakeholders have strong feelings of ownership about their roles and responsibilities. Stakeholders articulated fluently and candidly during interviews their positive feelings about their work relationships that promote a sense of caring and belonging leading to a community of family. The Islamic community is totally immersed in the schools with many of its members serving continuously as volunteers.

An assessment of the staff evaluation system revealed that teachers have performance reviews annually. However, evidence did not reveal a correlation of the evaluation of teachers with professional learning and school-wide goals. The School Improvement Plan 2010-2015 showed evidence of a plan to promote continuous improvement through linking goals and objectives with professional learning experiences.

Nevertheless, correlating staff evaluation, professional learning, and school wide goals would enhance the growth of teachers in improving instructional practices for student learning.

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

- The leadership promotes quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate with a culture of high expectations.
- Stakeholder groups have meaningful leadership roles as well as opportunities to contribute to decisions that impact teaching and learning to promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership.
- Developing measurable school-wide goals and objectives for student learning in four priority areas for 2010-2015 provides the schools with a clear focus for improving student performance.

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

- Correlate the evaluation system with the professional growth of staff and school-wide goals for student learning.

Finding: Mohammed Schools of Atlanta has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

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

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

Staff have utilized a variety of resources to develop a standards based curriculum to direct instruction with high expectations for student learning that challenge them to excel. An aspect of the instructional program that stakeholders emphasized was the active involvement of students in the learning process citing examples of ways in which students use higher order thinking skills and apply their learning. In particular, parents mentioned that students prepare reports for class including the use of PowerPoint software to develop their presentations. A recent instructional feature is the piloting of single gender classes in science to encourage female students to excel. Data generated from a comparative analysis of the students' performance will provide a basis for subsequent planning.

During interviews, stakeholders indicated a need for additional technology to expand student access to more global information and integrate technology with instruction. Observations revealed that some technology equipment is available in the computer laboratory and various classrooms. Through observations, the QAR team determined that the schools provide access to comprehensive information and media services to promote student learning. The schools have developed a technology plan that identifies expectations and goals by grade level, and teachers schedule student use by grade level. However, there was not a schedule to provide time for students in all grades to utilize technology systematically to achieve goals outlined in the technology plan. Providing a technology instruction plan for each grade with a schedule for students to use existing technology to achieve technology goals would facilitate student access and integration with instruction.

The schools' commitment to continuous professional learning provides teachers with opportunities to increase their capacity for quality instruction. The schools have fostered a strong and viable relationship with a local public school district to provide a host of workshops and classes that allow teachers to learn best practices for classroom instruction. Access to professional development offerings also provides an opportunity for teachers to complete certification requirements. Another component of professional learning permits the collaborative participation of staff in weekly planning meetings which include discussions about student progress, using data to make instructional decisions, instructional planning to implement best practices, assessing student performance to determine the need for instructional interventions, and evaluating schools' procedures. Though professional development is an integral part of the schools' culture of continuous improvement, developing a professional learning plan aligned with staff evaluation and school-wide goals for student learning would enhance the preparation of teachers to impart high-quality instruction to improve student learning.

The team noted that stakeholders work collaboratively to create and foster a nurturing learning environment with high expectations communicated daily to students on all levels by staff and parents. The focus on adhering systematically to the tenets of the Muslim faith supports learning by increasing student compliance with rules, minimizing class disruptions caused by student behavior, and providing positive reinforcement as students are redirected. All stakeholders were able to share the teaching and learning goals as they relate to the schools' vision of developing students who apply ethics to everything they do. Interviews and observations confirmed that collaboration among teachers is extensive. Planning meetings

permit teachers to collaborate within and across grade levels so that they can align curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote teaching and learning. Their interaction also permits them to identify instructional interventions to address areas wherein students need to grow academically. Staff, students, and parents were able to identify learning opportunities for students that allow students to be challenged, supported, creative, and successful. Several families indicated that they had relocated to enroll their children in the schools so they could receive a quality faith-based education where reportedly 100% of the students graduate from high school.

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

- Collaboration among stakeholders promotes a strong commitment to adhering to religious principles that vastly support the schools' vision and mission and provide a nurturing and supportive learning environment with high expectations for student academic performance.

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

- Develop a school-wide professional development plan aligned with the School Improvement Plan goals for student learning.
- Develop a technology instructional plan for each grade with a schedule for students to use existing equipment to achieve technology goals.

Finding: Mohammed Schools of Atlanta 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 work of the staff at the Mohammed Schools to collect, use, and analyze data to identify goals for student learning and determine instruction and assessment procedures has provided the schools with a systemic process for collecting and managing data. They in turn use these data to assess progress toward meeting expectations for student learning. The leadership, teachers, and the data specialist stressed that they use data to provide feedback to improve instructional practices and student performance. They also emphasized their focus on disaggregating and monitoring cohort data to identify trends and issues in student achievement.

The schools establish performance measures for student learning that yield information to improve student performance and school effectiveness. In addition to classroom assessments, the schools use several

standardized tests to assist teachers in evaluating student performance and school effectiveness. Currently, among the assessments are the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), Stanford Achievement Test Series, Tenth Edition, and Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP). Other data sources are the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) and SAT that teachers also use to assess student progress.

The schools' profile shows student performance data that served as a basis for developing the School Improvement Plan with school-wide goals for student learning. Along with goals, the plan includes action steps with activities, resources, and timelines. Using available data, staff focused their plans on addressing areas needing improvement. Through team meetings and planning, staff used data to make curriculum and instruction decisions such as adopting Reading First to increase literacy for students in grades one through three. Test scores indicate that the Reading First program has continued to increase student literacy, fluency, and comprehension.

Having a data specialist to compile, analyze, and present data to staff for discussion has provided a more in-depth review of student performance to drive instructional changes. According to interviews with stakeholders, the staff's collaboration to review data, to participate in professional development, and to work as a team to adjust instruction depicted a strong commitment to using data to make decisions for instruction and improving student achievement. The process – described by staff – that the elementary school used to qualify for a Reading First grant by researching its advantages, participating in training, and developing a school plan for its implementation is a prime example of the staff's understanding of using data to infuse research-based programs into the curriculum to improve student performance.

While the QAR team observed that the schools use data to make instructional decisions to improve student learning, the team could not verify through reviewing artifacts or deciphering feedback during interviews how the schools share assessment data with parents and students. Clearly, the school improvement team shared information with the team about the analysis and use of data to drive instructional decisions. However, expanding communication with parents and students to provide information about student performance would permit individual students and their parents to monitor students' progress.

Stakeholders also discussed the schools' aspirations to include a wider range of the area's population among their student body, and they noted issues such as the greater community's limited knowledge about the schools. For example, several stakeholders commented that residents beyond its Islamic community are not even aware of the schools though several of its Islamic families transferred to the area to attend the schools. Therefore, the Mohammed Schools would benefit from expanding meaningful communication and developing relationships with a broader spectrum of the community by networking and forming partnerships, along with more widely disseminating information about student performance and school effectiveness.

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

- Staff used data to develop a five-year School Improvement Plan with four major areas of concentration including increasing student literacy, improving mathematics performance, enhancing character development, and expanding use of technology.
- Staff are committed to identifying student's needs based on data analysis to modify and differentiate instruction to improve student learning.
- The schools have the services of a data specialist to provide more in-depth reviews of student performance data to make instruction-related decisions as well as provide professional development about the use of data.

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

- Expand communication with parents and students to provide information about student performance based on test data to permit individual students and their parents to monitor students' progress.

Finding: Mohammed Schools of Atlanta 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 Mohammed Schools of Atlanta have the essential resources and services to provide the necessary support for the vision and purpose to promote student success. The schools' approach to providing these resources and services was evident during interviews with stakeholders. Many of the stakeholders discussed the positive learning environment of the schools which they attributed in part to the number of staff who are present daily and the low student-teacher ratios which was evident during classroom observations. During interviews with staff, parents, and students, they were all consistent in sharing information about the qualifications of staff noting that the schools employ staff who are capable of fulfilling assigned roles and responsibilities. A Consultative Board member stated that the Mohammed Schools of Atlanta aspire to have all staff hold a state certificate in their areas of instruction. Several staff members are currently seeking higher educational degrees.

From stakeholders' perspectives about the quality of education, students and parents agree that the schools have dedicated teachers. They also agree that teachers do a good job of centering the curriculum on educational, cultural, and religious experiences. The 2010-2015 School Improvement Plan and report states the following:

- Average years of teaching experience exceeds 20 years
- 50% of staff are certified (others are currently seeking certification)
- 3 staff members are currently enrolled in doctoral programs
- 30% of staff have advanced degrees

During classroom visits, the QAR team viewed teachers guiding student instruction on an individual basis and allowing students to direct many facets of the lesson. In all lessons observed, students were actively engaged in their learning.

The schools display a strong drive to increase professional development with student achievement as its major focus. Several school personnel discussed various avenues they use to increase their levels of knowledge. The staff spoke about professional development opportunities afforded them by the schools' leadership. A definite source of professional development mentioned by all stakeholders was a local public school district. Apparent throughout interviews was the support from the administrator for teachers to participate in professional development. The schools have provided support for teachers to attend conferences such as those sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and National Science Teachers Association (NSTA). In the School Improvement Plan 2010-2015, professional

development was discussed in specific detail in relation to goals for student learning. Designing a process in the School Improvement Plan for the systemic evaluation and monitoring of professional development after implementation to discover its impact on student achievement would promote systematic support for improving the quality of teaching to increase student learning.

The concept of professional development was a topic discussed not only by staff. Parents, community representatives, and other stakeholders made consistent remarks to confirm those of staff about their pursuit of professional learning. The team found that this information about the staff's involvement in professional learning was in direct support of the schools' vision and purpose. However, the team did not see evidence of protocols and/or program development to systematically handle students with disabilities (SWD). Developing and implementing a systematic protocol consistent throughout the schools would improve how interventions are set to meet students' needs. This Response to Intervention (RTI) protocol would allow the needs of students with disabilities to be met in the Least Restrictive Environment. Current students with disabilities who are struggling could be served and/or discovered and a program developed on an individual basis. This process would use the vision statement's ideals of "cultivating students to become productive" based upon individual ability levels to systematically guide the provision of services to students.

During the staff interviews, responses to questions about the financial business of the Mohammed Schools of Atlanta indicated that the leadership oversees its operation. Stakeholders revealed that the board approves the budgetary process to ensure that financial resources are available for the schools' operation.

Discussions with stakeholders indicated that in addition to tuition, the schools focus on sponsoring projects to raise money for the schools and increasing the number of students to provide general funds. In response to questions about how the money "raised" was handled, staff stated that the funds were spent at the discretion of the schools' leadership to meet budget shortfalls from tuition funds. The business/finance officer manages and monitors the schools' revenue using QuickBooks for payroll functions and monitors all financial transactions with annual audits conducted externally by a certified public accountant.

From interviews with all stakeholders, the QAR team was informed that the "environment" of the school was of utmost importance. The elementary building was a topic of continuous conversation by all groups with regard to "upgrading" or "improvements." The high school building is a fairly new building having been constructed from recycled materials from a nearby school that closed. Students mentioned that environment in the schools is inviting and conducive to learning. Many made references to projects they had assisted with around the facility. For example, one teacher stated how her class had worked on the trail that surrounds the building. Another student discussed how he and his father had helped install the new playground.

During interviews of staff members, they stated that volunteers from the community and parents of students assist in keeping the landscape updated. One gentleman in particular, who has no children in school, volunteers on a regular basis to plant flowers and help maintain the landscape. Stakeholders emphasized the need for building improvements during interviews as "weaknesses" for the school.

Artifacts documented a written protocol for emergency situations. The school emergency plan provides guidelines for handling any emergency that might arise. Staff members had a thorough knowledge about protocols for emergencies resulting from natural disasters, fires, and other incidents. Drills offer opportunities for stakeholders to practice readiness procedures. During interviews, one staff member mentioned practicing for such situations and how they followed a set routine. Another staff member mentioned a color code system that was in order for different situations that may arise. And, staff shed light on how they handle situations of strangers approaching the school campus. However, the team did

not observe plans posted on classrooms walls or evacuation routes for emergencies. However, protocols were apparent to the team that the schools take every precaution to maintain a safe and orderly facility with an environment conducive to student learning.

The team interviewed staff about their varying roles and responsibilities. Many aspects of student guidance are handled not only by the counselor but also by the staff as a whole. During interviews, several staff members described situations in which they offered guidance to students due to the “community” atmosphere of the schools. Many alumni are currently teaching or involved as stakeholders who are able to offer advice and assist students as well. The high school boasted about the students in this year’s graduating class who have already received scholarships while others are awaiting notification about their college acceptance letters. To facilitate the process, a certified guidance counselor provides guidance services at the high school level along with providing counseling services for middle school students. A discipline coordinator who works under the supervision of the guidance counselor provides guidance services and career awareness opportunities for elementary students. Additionally, stakeholders who have training in special areas provide services as indicated. For example, a parent volunteer who is a psychologist provides professional services for the schools.

During interviews, the team learned that the schools have a registrar who maintains a secure, accurate, and complete record system in accordance with state and federal regulations. While the registrar manages the record keeping process, the guidance counselor also works with high school records. Staff have access to student records, however, the records remain in a secured location and may be retrieved by appropriate stakeholders only in the designated area.

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

- Teachers access resources in a local public school district to pursue relevant professional development focusing on the knowledge and skills needed to deliver high-quality instruction to increase student achievement.
- The leadership promotes opportunities for teachers to become more qualified in areas of instruction by pursuing professional development.
- The school environment provides many positive learning opportunities for students as well as numerous possibilities for involving community supporters to promote student success.

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

- Develop consistent protocols to deal with Students with Disabilities (SWD).
- Provide a systemic process for applying Response to Intervention (RTI) services school wide.
- Design a process in the School Improvement Plan for the systemic evaluation of professional development after implementation to discover its impact on student achievement.

Finding: Mohammed Schools of Atlanta has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

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

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

The schools maintain effective, extensive, and viable communication and relationships among stakeholders within the Islamic community. The supportive networks strengthen the schools' efforts to advance the vision and purpose. By fostering interaction within the community to support student learning, the schools collaborate with stakeholders to access community resources, sponsor fundraisers for effective school operation, and manage finances. The relationship that the schools have with stakeholders is obvious in every part of the academic programs, extracurricular activities, and overall operation. Further, schools promote collaboration with stakeholders through strategic planning sessions, forums, parent conferences, Islamic Parents Teachers Students Community Association (IPTSCA), and the community.

Teachers seek professional development to improve their instructional delivery and student learning. The teaching staff has leadership roles in various areas throughout the schools. Many of the teachers mentor high schools students and tutor after school on their personal time. The leadership team values the teacher's abilities and organizes advanced training. The teachers are very involved with the leadership team and meet weekly to collaborate thus providing a supportive learning community.

Through conducting interviews and reviewing artifacts, the QAR team confirmed that the schools have formal channels to facilitate meaningful, two-way communication with stakeholders. Among the various avenues of communication are the website, newsletters, and brochures. Other sources of information are student agendas, parent handbooks, student handbooks, and report cards. Schools also use e-mail messages and CallingPosts to facilitate parental contact. Parent-teacher conferences permit a two-way flow of information, along with surveys and activities within the schools. Quarterly parent-teacher conferences permit interaction to review the progress of students in more detail. Schools provide information for parents daily through the use of the agendas which update them about students' assignments and progress in classes. Additional sources of information are progress reports and report cards which the schools distribute at six-week intervals to inform parents about students' performance.

The schools thrive because staff actively solicit the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to support their work. Parents and community members volunteer their time and expertise in specific areas. Volunteers are passionate about their commitment and their desire to promote the success of the schools. Many of the volunteers do not have children at all or have no children in the schools, yet they are adamant about supporting the efforts of the schools. A member of the community uses his personal time and monetary resources to landscape the grounds. The volunteer landscaper is neither a part of the schools' alumni nor does he have children in the schools. Another example is that of a parent volunteer who as a psychologist provides professional services for the schools. And, the community (Masjid) provides representatives who share their time and expertise with the schools.

The schools utilize available resources to replenish their funds. According to feedback during interviews, the tuition rate is low and, therefore, insufficient to subsidize the schools' operational budget. With limited revenue, schools rely on support from stakeholders for fundraisers to bring in necessary funds to achieve their goals and plans for improvement. The Mohammad Schools of Atlanta have five annual

fundraisers: Road Race for Education, Bake Sales, Day of Majesty, and Moonlight Ball to provide financial support for their operation.

To communicate the expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to all stakeholders, the schools depend heavily on their community, parents, and teacher involvement. Expectations of stakeholders in their various roles within the schools are outlined in the student agendas, parent handbooks, student handbooks, and parent-teacher conferences. The IPTSCA and community forums serve as media for conveying improvement efforts to promote student learning.

As a practice, schools present information about students, their performance, and school effectiveness to stakeholders. The community (Masjid) provides another outlet for schools to distribute information and communicate meaningfully and responsively with stakeholders. Reportedly, schools share information continually with the community, a large constituency composed of approximately 2500 members. More specifically, weekly announcements after Friday Jumah prayer services inform the community about student performance and school effectiveness.

Interviews and artifacts revealed that the schools do not market and disseminate information to the broader community. However, stakeholders discussed the schools' aspirations to include a wider range of the area's population among their student body, and they noted issues such as the greater community's limited knowledge about the schools. For example, several stakeholders commented that residents beyond the Islamic community are not even aware of the schools though several of its Islamic families transferred to the area to attend the schools. Therefore, the Mohammed Schools would benefit from expanding meaningful communication and developing relationships with a broader spectrum of the community by networking and forming partnerships, along with more widely disseminating information about student performance and school effectiveness.

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

- The Mohammad Schools of Atlanta collaborate with stakeholders to support student learning, sponsor fundraising for effective school operation, provide access to community resources, and manage finances.

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

- Expand the distribution of information about student performance and school effectiveness to a broader range of stakeholders in the community.

Finding: Mohammed Schools of Atlanta has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

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

The Mohammed Schools of Atlanta demonstrated, verbally and through classroom observations, that the schools' vision guides the focus on student performance. The School Improvement Plan 2010-2015 references four areas designed to enhance student performance and school effectiveness. The discussion of data-driven instruction was highlighted as a driving force through interviews with staff. Data displays exhibited in several locations in the school building provided ready access to information that mirrored student achievement. All groups of stakeholders effectively communicated descriptions of achievement data, benchmark examinations, and graduation rates during interviews. Communication with stakeholders revealed that the schools continually monitor data by disaggregating standardized assessments results to guide instruction.

During the interview session with the Leadership Team, staff discussed their efforts to continually monitor cohort data from grade level to grade level. They described how data from cohorts within the schools are disaggregated to show longitudinal trends in student performance. However, the QAR team did not find evidence of how the schools use student performance data to guide a plan for professional development. Using student performance data and school-wide goals for student learning to drive the identification of professional development goals would provide a direct link between professional learning and student achievement.

Having the Leadership Team manage professional development planning guided by overall school goals for student learning would facilitate a systemic process for improving teaching and learning. An essential element of the professional development plan would be the provision for follow up to evaluate the application of lessons learned to ensure continuous improvement. Evaluative data from the implementation of professional development would determine the effectiveness of interventions on student achievement and subsequently guide future planning for learning opportunities. The team noted that the staff's activities during the past two or more years indicate a strong commitment to continuously improving all facets of the schools' operation. Their dedication to learning and implementing best practices guided by student data have ensured a focus on continuous school improvement.

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

- Staff disaggregate data from standardized assessments to increase individual student achievement.
- The staff uses cohort data to identify developing trends in student learning within the schools.

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

- Assess annual achievement goals within the School Improvement Plan using periodic reviews to adjust achievement goals as needed and use benchmarks as indicators.
- Utilize professional learning evaluation data along with student performance data to drive professional development goals.

- Evaluate the schools' professional development plan to discover its impact on student achievement.

Finding: Mohammed Schools of Atlanta 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-GA accreditation with AdvancED.

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Mrs. Pat Summers, Chair (Georgia SACS CASI, Field Consultant)
- Mrs. Gloria Clarke, Team Member (Imagine International Academy of Smyrna)
- Mr. Kevin Yancey, Team Member (Mary Persons High School)
- Mrs. Shanna Ritch, Team Member (Kids R Kids)

AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

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

Vision and Purpose

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

Governance and Leadership

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

Teaching and Learning

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

Documenting and Using Results

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

Resource and Support Systems

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

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

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

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

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