



Quality Assurance Report

The Bay-Arenac Intermediate School District
Bay City, Michigan
Michael Dewey, Superintendent



AdvancED is the parent organization of the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and Improvement, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and Schools Improvement, and National Study of School Evaluation.

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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 Schools (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 2006, NCA CASI, SACS CASI, and the research and development arm of the accrediting associations, the National Study of School Evaluation, unified to form **AdvancED**. Dedicated to advancing excellence in education, **AdvancED** provides accreditation, research, and professional services to 23,000 schools in 65 countries, serving 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, school districts and educational service agencies continuously improve.

The Accreditation Process

To earn and maintain accreditation from NCA CASI or SACS CASI, educational service agencies must:

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

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

Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

Purpose

The purpose of the Quality Assurance Review is to:

1. Evaluate the educational service agency's adherence to the **AdvancED** quality standards.
2. Assess the efficacy of the agency's improvement process and methods for quality assurance.
3. Identify commendations and recommendations to improve the agency.
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 agency is operating with institutional integrity – that it is fulfilling its vision and mission for its learners and other constituents.

Educational Service Agency Preparation

To prepare for the Quality Assurance Review, the educational service agency community engages in an in-depth self assessment of each of the seven **AdvancED** standards. The agency identifies and describes the evidence that demonstrates that it is meeting each standard. Through this internal review, the agency examines how its systems and processes contribute to learner performance and agency 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 agency. The team reviews the findings of the agency's internal self-assessment, conducts interviews with representative groups of constituents, reviews learner performance data and other documentation provided by the agency, and observes practices and daily operations. The team engages in professional deliberations to reach consensus on the agency'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 agency 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 **AdvancED**. The report contains commendations and recommendations for improvement.

Using the Report – Acting on the Recommendations

The educational service agency uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The agency is held accountable for addressing the recommendations identified in the report. The NCA CASI State Office is available to assist agencies in addressing the recommendations. Two years following the Quality Assurance Review Team visit, the agency must submit a progress report detailing the actions and progress it has made on the team's recommendations. The report is reviewed at the state and national

level to ensure the agency is addressing the recommendations.

Accreditation Recommendation

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

Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and Schools (NCA CASI)], a division of **AdvancED**, visited the Bay-Arenac Intermediate School District, an Educational Service Agency on October 7-10, 2007.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed: 34 administrators, 42 teachers, 28 support staff, 24 parents and business partners, 34 students and 4 Board of Education members for a total of 166 stakeholders. The team also visited three of the six local districts served by the service agency and interviewed representative staff of all six local districts.

The team also reviewed documents, learner performance data, and other artifacts provided by the agency. Specifically, the team examined the agency's systems and processes in relation to the seven **AdvancED** standards:

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

The **AdvancED** standards focus on systems within the agency and systematic methods of attaining high learner 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 agency, looking not only for adherence to individual standards, but also for how the agency functions as a whole and embodies the practices and characteristics of a quality educational service agency.

Challenges and Limitations

- The fluctuation of enrollment and the challenge of predicting enrollment due to the mobility of the community
- Transportation and the need for alternative means of transporting students because of the geographic nature of the area served by the agency

- The awareness and recognition of the agency and its position in the community.
- The opportunity to create comprehensive facility plan based on fluctuation in enrollment alternative means of transportation for some programs on a yearly basis.
- Community understanding of the function and purpose of an educational service agency creates the opportunity to publicize the many accomplishments and services of the agency. Several groups (teachers, shareholders, and parents) highly suggest that the BAISD use various vehicles (i.e. newspapers, television, radio, mailings, etc) to promote itself to the communities.
- Update the comprehensive facility plan based on fluctuation in enrollment on a yearly basis.
- The opportunity for members of the governing board to act as liaisons to local boards of education.

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

Commendations

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

The Quality Assurance Review Team commends the Bay-Arenac ISD for:

- Outstanding leadership of the superintendent that is visionary and focused on quality service to constituents. The superintendent is highly visible throughout the service agency and in the local districts that are served by the ISD.
- A strategic planning process that unites the district and its programs into a comprehensive and unified approach to service, organizational effectiveness and improving student learning.
- The strong communication of the mission and vision of BAISD as evidenced through the actions of the leadership and the testimony of both internal and external constituents.
- All districts including the ISD have implemented Professional Learning Communities and Pyramids of Intervention, a protocol that is focused on all students.
- The Career Center incorporates college credit and application of skills into its classes which has changed the perception of the Center.
- All districts have collaborated in the development of comprehensive curricula in English Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Fine Arts and Technology.
- A plan has been developed for Career Center teachers to take additional courses to become Highly Qualified and to revise course offerings to reflect the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements will benefit students.
- BAISD provides its teachers who have reached the maximum step on the salary schedule with a continual improvement incentive for professional development to develop skills and knowledge.
- The Career Center has identified a process to revise course offerings to reflect the Michigan Merit Curriculum and grant core credit for Center classes.
- The relationship building that has taken place to bring diverse communities and districts together to think and act systemically.
- The cost efficiencies that have been created in the areas of credit recovery, mail delivery and collaborative technology purchasing.

Recommendations

In addition to the commendations, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following recommendations for improvement. The team focused its recommendations on those areas that, if addressed, will have the greatest impact on improving service, student performance and overall agency effectiveness. The Bay-Arenac Intermediate School District will be held accountable for making progress on each of the recommendations noted in this section. Two years following this review, the agency will be asked to submit a progress report on these recommendations.

1. Develop a comprehensive plan to evaluate programs and organizational effectiveness in quantitative terms.
2. Establish clear benchmarks for each and every initiative.
3. Initiate a data retrieval system that allows for user-friendly and timely access to data to improve instruction, measure agency effectiveness, evaluate curriculum, and disaggregate data.
4. Develop a process to ensure that comprehensive input from local district leadership is obtained during the development of major ISD initiatives.
5. Explore additional methods of communication and service delivery both internally and externally as changes in technology occur.
6. Investigate alternative means of transportation for some programs.

Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Educational Service Agencies

The team reviewed the agency's adherence to each of the **AdvancED** standards. The findings from this review are provided in the section **Standards For Accreditation** of this report.

Next Steps

The agency should:

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

Resources

AdvancED offers a range of resources to support your agency 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 agencies with their improvement efforts. Available any where, any time, the network can be queried for information on a variety of improvement subjects. The **AdvancED** Research and Development division provides research, handbooks, and tools to assist agencies 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 review and for action at the national level by the **AdvancED** Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the Agency. Upon receiving its accreditation, the agency should celebrate its achievement with the agency community. The NCA CASI accreditation seal is available through the NCA CASI website for agencies to post on their website and in agency communications. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and more can be ordered from the website to help you share your accomplishment with your community.

Summary

The accreditation process engages the educational service agency in an ongoing journey of continuous improvement. The next steps in this journey are to build on the strengths and address the recommendations noted in this report. Doing so will enable the agency to advance in its quest for excellence and deepen the fulfillment of its mission for all learners and other constituents.

Standards for Accreditation

The primary requirement for accreditation is that Bay-Arenac Intermediate School District demonstrates that it meets the seven standards for accreditation. The findings of the Quality Assurance Review Team regarding the standards for accreditation are summarized on the following pages.

Vision and Purpose

STANDARD: The agency establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of learners and the effectiveness of the services being provided by the agency.

The Bay-Arenac Intermediate School District (BAISD) is committed to a shared purpose and vision. Constituents, including agency classroom teachers and leaders, constituent district leadership, and parents, know the mission, recognize its foundational function in the work and outreach of the BAISD, and acknowledge the mission as the core of decision making and the center of service delivery.

Data from multiple constituent surveys, student enrollment in programs, and the academic success of ALL students supports that the vision of excellence benefits all students and guides the continuation, development, or abandonment of programs.

The vision, purpose, and goals of BAISD are communicated through a variety of publications and displays, but the strength of communication lies in the clarity of expectation for student learning and the goodwill and actions of the leadership and employees guided by the mission.

Updates on the progress toward goals aligned with the mission are provided to local school districts and school personnel through annual, semi-annual, and quarterly meetings with various internal and external groups.

Student and program data are collected and analyzed to determine areas of improvement aligned with the mission. The vision and purpose are reviewed as the goals of the strategic plan are carried out and measured by the compass point of the mission. The seminal mission's renewal is in the systematic measurement of the collaborative decision-making and actions to achieve the goals that are measured against the mission itself. The agency's mission and its defined belief statements guide its attitudes, actions, and resource allocations ranging from the allocation of time and materials to the equitable distribution of service.

Finding

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review team has assigned the overall assessment level of **OPERATIONAL**, indicating that the Bay-Arenac ISD has met the accreditation requirements for this standard.

Governance and Leadership

STANDARD: The agency provides governance and leadership that promote learner performance and agency effectiveness.

The Bay-Arenac ISD is highly effective in establishing and communicating policy and procedure. There appears to be multiple and varied evaluations of performance along with surveys to determine how the agency is performing at any particular moment.

Input from staff, students, parents and community members is solicited on a regular basis and opportunities to be involved in decision-making occur through the various committee structures. Significant time is dedicated to making sure that constituent districts and their staff and students are given equitable service and support.

Policy has determined that there is a formal process to implement newly developed programs and initiatives. Great care is given to the recruitment, hiring and evaluation of personnel that has produced a highly motivated, skilled and student-centered staff. The vision and mission of Bay-Arenac has impacted the leadership's implementation of the vision, while policies of the board and administration have created the structure to create a culture of improvement dedicated to serving students at all levels.

Finding

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review team has assigned the overall assessment level of **HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL**, indicating the Bay-Arenac ISD has met the accreditation requirements for this standard.

Teaching and Learning

STANDARD: The agency provides and supports research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all learners.

The Bay-Arenac Intermediate School District maintains a clear focus on educational excellence for all learners in its Career Center as well as the schools that exist within its service area. The Career Center's use of industry standards, focus on Student Success skills and implementation of Program Review are just a few of the practices that benefit all of its students.

The focus of General Education on developing curriculum collaboratively with its constituent districts was evidenced from the responses of many of the stakeholders. District representatives reported the value placed on the support that General Education gives to teachers and administrators in numerous ways including: leadership training, the development of professional learning communities, early childhood initiatives, professional development, and technical assistance in the local schools.

Special education services are delivered in all of the districts through cooperative agreements. It was noted by several of the local constituent district staff members that it would not be possible for these programs to exist without the assistance of the Bay-Arenac ISD. The Special Education staff of the service agency has initiated a customized training program in the Continuous Improvement Monitoring

System and Response to Intervention (RTI). While these programs are a part of the Michigan Special Education Delivery Plan, it is the staff of the service agency that provides the training. There is an emphasis on delivery of service using technology.

These highlights emphasize the comprehensive teaching and learning services delivered to students, teachers and administrators in the Bay-Arenac ISD.

Finding

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review team has assigned the overall assessment level of **OPERATIONAL** indicating the Bay-Arenac ISD has met the accreditation requirements for this standard.

Documenting and Using Results

STANDARD: The agency enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve the agency's effectiveness.

The evidence witnessed by the team validated that volumes of data is collected and analyzed but often in a time consuming manner. The NCA team reviewed many needs assessment instruments, student performance results, strategic plans, and an assortment of data points.

The Career Center utilizes a variety of assessment tools to improve student performance. On a yearly basis, teachers are provided results from the Perkins CPI's, OCTIP Follow-Up Studies, and percent of students who earned a Student Success Awards, and semester attendance and grade comparisons. In late spring of each year, all seniors go through an exit interview, to ascertain the quality of the student's experiences in the Career center program.

Student performance on content areas measured by the MEAP, ACT, and Eighth Grade technology Literacy Assessment, and End-of -Course and testing out assessment results. Students served by the ISD Special Education programs use a variety of tools to assess student performance. Decisions regarding the continuous improvement of the teaching and learning process are guided by the student assessment data.

For example, studies of future trends and economic indicators clearly showed a need for a change of focus for the career center. Based on this information they are currently building a Health and Science Wing to open in the fall of 2008.

Finding

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review team has assigned the overall assessment level of **OPERATIONAL** indicating the Bay-Arenac ISD has met the accreditation requirements for this standard.

Resource and Support Systems

STANDARD: The agency has the resources necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure the delivery of services and programs that support learning for all students.

Educational Service Agencies in Michigan exist through three major funding sources: local property taxes, state funding and federal funds. Each agency operates with three separate funds which each of the funds ear-marked for specific activities. The Bay-Arenac ISD levies local property taxes for its General Fund, Career and Technical Operations and Special Education. Each of these local levies is supported by funds from State of Michigan in the areas of Special Education and Career and Technical Education. General Education functions are those functions that support the day to day operation of local schools and districts.

Career Technical Education and General Education have very thorough and well planned written hiring, placement, and training procedures. Special Education, while having a system in place, is not as thorough in writing as its counterparts, but the mentoring process seems well established and respected. Evaluation for all three groups seems very thorough. The ISD provides and fully supports ongoing learning opportunities for all staff to improve their effectiveness. Retirement appears to be the main cause for staff leaving the agency.

Although most of Bay-Arenac's constituents mention monetary resources as a concern for the agency's future, the ISD does an excellent job of stretching its resources to the fullest. The current ISD Needs Assessment is an excellent tool to ensure that resources flow to the appropriate areas. Well documented budgets, program designs, and expense reports ensure effective use of its human, material, and fiscal resources.

Bay-Arenac places its students at the forefront of its programs and is committed to their excellence. Through flyers, emails, web posting, and other contact with its local districts, it promotes and offers services to all of its constituents. Beyond the Career Center and its obvious advantages, the agency enables learners to achieve and exceed expectations for learning. It meets the special needs of all learners while complying with applicable regulations.

Finding

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review team has assigned the overall assessment level of **HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL** indicating the Bay-Arenac ISD has met the accreditation requirements for this standard.

Constituent Communications and Relationships

STANDARD: The agency fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its constituents.

Through various methods, Bay-Arenac Intermediate School District fosters a quality communication network. It provides open lines of communication to the community and seeks input from its stakeholders. The Bay-Arenac ISD Career Center, through numerous surveys, exit interviews, focus groups and other methods, seeks feedback to continuously evaluate its program effectiveness.

The General Education Department fosters collaboration among the local districts with monthly superintendent meetings, curriculum council meetings, and collaborative meetings which explore ways to share services. There are a variety of focus groups that facilitate communication among and within the community.

The Special Education Department has numerous initiatives that ensure consistent communication and foster relationships among their community. The agency has a comprehensive website and publishes a host of attractive print materials that promote their programs and services. The agency's Annual Report and Essential Services Guide are used to inform the public, and the superintendent publishes a weekly internal memo designed to share current events and departmental activities

Finding

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review team has assigned the overall assessment level of **HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL**, indicating the Bay-Arenac ISD has met the accreditation requirements for this standard.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

STANDARD: The agency establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that positively impacts the services and programs in support of student learning.

The process for continuous improvement used by the agency is a strategic planning process that involved stakeholders in the development of the goals, objectives and strategies. The evidence presented displays the use several groups from agency staff as well as constituent districts, members of business community and parents and non-parents throughout the service agency

The alignment of the vision, mission and beliefs of the agency were easily articulated in all focus groups in a clear and concise manner. Each division of the agency, special education, career technical education and general education also uses a format that develops specific plans that address the mission of each division, while aligning with the agencies strategic plan.

There is also evidence to suggest that throughout the agency a climate of continuous improvement exists. Staff continually made reference to the mission and vision of the agency and indicated at the same time that it was necessary to always pursue improving the delivery of all programs.

The primary challenge in this area will be the establishment of baseline data and benchmarks that will demonstrate the value of each initiative that is developed and delivered to the constituents of the agency.

Finding

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review team has assigned the overall assessment level of **HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL**, indicating the Bay-Arenac has met the accreditation requirements for this standard.

Conclusion

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

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

The Quality Assurance Review Team expresses appreciation to Michael R...Dewey and David Sevener as well as members of the professional staff, and other community representatives for hosting the review team. The team wishes the agency and its constituents much success in the quest for excellence through NCA CASI accreditation with **AdvancED**.

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

Chair:

Michael Bugenski, State Director NCA Michigan, Lansing Michigan

Vice Chair:

Sharon Zimmers, State Director, NCA Ohio, Columbus Ohio

Team Members:

Phillip G. Price, Superintendent, Mayfield City Ohio

Mary Heidloff, VP AdvancED, Saline Michigan NCA/CASI

Dan Luciani, Educational Consultant Calhoun ISD, Marshall Michigan

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AdvancED Standards for Quality Educational Service Agencies

The **AdvancED** Standards for Quality Educational Service Agencies are comprehensive statements of quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for Agencies to achieve quality learner performance and organizational effectiveness. As Agencies reach higher levels of implementation of the standards, they will have a greater capacity to support ever-increasing learner 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 Educational Service Agency establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the Educational Service Agency.

Governance and Leadership

The Educational Service Agency provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and Educational Service Agency effectiveness.

Teaching and Learning

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

Documenting and Using Results

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

Resource and Support Systems

The Educational Service Agency has the resources and services necessary to support its vision

and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Constituent Communications and Relationships

The Educational Service Agency fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its constituents.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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