

**Report of the
Quality Assurance Review Team
for
Saint Patrick's Catholic Elementary School**

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United States

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Review Dates: 04/02/2009 - 04/03/2009



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

Quality Assurance Review Report

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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 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 continuously improve.

The Accreditation Process. To earn and maintain accreditation from NCA CASI or SACS CASI, schools must:

1) Meet the AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools. Schools demonstrate adherence to the seven AdvancED standards 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 recommendations to help the school improve. The team provides an oral exit report to the school and a written report detailing the team's recommendations. The school acts on the team's recommendations 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.
2. Assess the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance.
3. Identify commendations and recommendations 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 recommendations for improvement.

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

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

Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), a division of AdvancED, visited the Saint Patrick's Catholic Elementary School in Elkhorn, Nebraska, United States on 04/02/2009 - 04/03/2009.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed Donald Ridder, 2 members of the administrative team, 127 students, 13 parents, and 74 teachers. In addition, para-educators 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:

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

The AdvancED standards focus on systems 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 recommendations.

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 teachers are dedicated to their profession and passionate about helping the students they teach.**

A comment from one student interviewed was that "The teachers here are always available and willing to give us extra help." The teachers provide before and after school tutorials to assist students in their learning process.

Availability and willingness of teachers to assist students in their learning encourages student academic achievement.

- **As a result of staff development, teachers understand and use differentiated instruction in their classrooms to address individual learning styles.**

In interviews both teachers and students described how varying instructional strategies are used in multiple classrooms. Further evidence is the promotion of students from one level to the next specifically in upper level math classes as content is mastered and the student is challenged to the next level of performance.

By accepting that all students learn but not necessarily the same way or at the same pace, teachers allow for individual differences and help young people feel confident and empowered to achieve their best academically.

- **The vision and purpose are embedded in all aspects of the school culture.**

The mission "To teach as Jesus did by challenging all students to become their very best spiritually, behaviorally, and academically" is posted throughout the school, on the website, and in all school communications. Furthermore, all stakeholders including students, teachers, administrators, and parents know what the mission is and live it through the Discipline with Purpose (DWP) program as well as throughout the day as they lift each other in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving.

Knowing and living the mission keeps stakeholders focused on making the students the best that they can be academically, behaviorally, and spiritually.

- **Availability and utilization of technology to assist in the delivery of instruction is apparent throughout the school.**

All teachers have a link to the school website where they weekly post grades and class assignments, lesson plans, and student expectations. Additionally, while the team visited classrooms, the team saw the utilization of the mimeo as well as other current technology for instructional purposes.

Schools and teachers who use multiple strategies to assist student understanding and learning promote student success and achievement.

- **Communication between and among the school and all stakeholders is extensive and effective.**

In addition to the traditional methods of communicating such as parent-teacher conference, open houses, and local papers, St. Patrick's Catholic School communicates via electronic means using the weekly principal notes, weekly teacher newsletters, Edline, and the continuously updated school website. Interviews with all stakeholder groups validate that the communication with the school is tremendously effective.

To foster student success, a school must communicate expectations as well as student accomplishments to the stakeholder base.

- **The principal is a strong, effective leader who governs with a spirit of inclusiveness as he considers stakeholder input and continually focuses on the vision and purpose.**

In interviews with parents, students, and teachers, recurring comments praised the principal as a leader who was passionate about the welfare of students and staff. A teacher comment was "Teachers feel very supported by the principal."

Leadership that provides clear direction and stability ensures security for parents, faculty, and students so a climate that is supportive of student achievement can exist.

Recommendations

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

- **In a systematic format, gather and analyze data from classroom formative assessments using pre and post tests in areas such as reading, math, and writing to inform and drive instruction.**

In interviews, teachers noted the use of pre and post tests, but they also noted there is not a formal process in place for analyzing the data, implementing strategies to address deficiencies, and following up with review of results. These data were not made available to the visiting team.

Use of data to track effectiveness of instructional strategies validates student success.

- **Establish a school improvement team consisting of the administrator and teachers to research and choose a school improvement process that includes developing a profile, gathering and analyzing student learning data both formative and summative, establishing goal(s) to address deficiencies, developing an action plan based on research and "best practices," implementing the strategies chosen, and tracking student performance in achieving those goals.**

The existing school improvement process has some missing pieces. An action plan for 2008-09 was not evident. Goals are generally based upon a perceptual survey of stakeholders and one norm referenced test rather than multiple student assessments both formative and summative.

Strategies based on both formative and summative assessments have the power to make a greater impact upon student achievement.

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 recommendations made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the recommendations.
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 team's recommendations. The report will be reviewed at the state and national

level to ensure that significant progress is being made toward the recommendations. Lack of progress can result in a change in accreditation status.

6. Continue to meet the AdvancED accreditation standards, submit required reports, engage in continuous improvement, and document results.

Resources

AdvancED offers a range of resources to support your school 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 NCA CASI 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 recommendations 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.

Standards for Accreditation

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

Standard 1. Vision and Purpose

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

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

As the school has grown in numbers so has the commitment to the vision, mission, and purpose among the stakeholders of this vibrant community. The mission statement is clear and concise and posted repeatedly throughout the building. Students, teachers, and parents can recite it quickly and believe in its guidance wholeheartedly.

It is clear that the educational experience of each child is viewed as an extension of his/her faith life. Decisions are made using the mission statement as a base for direction setting. Evidence of this direction is provided within curriculum development, religious services, the school climate, and the overall enthusiasm of each group of stakeholders for the school and for each other. Programs, both curricular and extra-curricular, are developed and implemented with the development of the whole child – spiritually, academically, socially, physically, and emotionally – as a primary goal. Students and parents are aware of this goal and are proud to be a part of this school community.

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

- The “To teach as Jesus did” model is visibly present throughout the hallways of the building.
- The principal confidently and consistently praises the staff and student population.
- The faculty, staff, and students express pride in their school and in their efforts to embody the mission and vision statements in all decisions that are made and programs that are initiated.
- The faculty begins each day in joint prayer in the commons area. This shared time compliments the “family” atmosphere and begins the day with positive reinforcement for the teaching team.
- Teacher assistants are called to share in joint prayer at the beginning of each day.
- Teachers support one another through a Prayer Partner experience and serve as mentors to newly hired staff members
- Students attend Mass twice each week. The pastor meets with the class responsible for planning the service to review readings and the delivery method for sharing the readings with the assembly.
- Students are given opportunity to share in other traditional faith services such as reconciliation, stations of the cross, and Rosary Club.
- Student testimony reflects respect for each other and for teachers.
- Posters and signs remind all stakeholders to “STOP” bully behavior and be kind to one another.
- Students praise their teachers and recognize their willingness to provide extra instructional assistance whenever needed or asked for.
- Teachers say “This place feels different” as evidenced by the “family atmosphere,” collegial

support, and positive student behavior.

- Student discipline strategies incorporate recognition for positive behaviors not just the negative.
- Students are called to live their faith through service to others. Successful campaigns to collect funds and provide outreach service were identified.
- DWP is viewed by the school staff as an integral part of the school program, and every staff member is trained to implement the philosophy of teaching the 15 life skills to students. The skills are modeled by teachers, teacher assistants, the administration, support staff and volunteers.

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

- Develop a plan to make sure the vision and purpose are crystal clear to all stakeholders by continuing the concentrated focus and deliberate goal setting.
- Involve all new community members in any review and updating processes that should occur.

Finding: Saint Patrick's Catholic Elementary School 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 pastor, principal, and governing board are advocates for the vision and improvement efforts. The leadership provides direction and systematically allocates resources to implement curricular and co-curricular programs that enable students to achieve high expectations for learning. The faculty, staff, students, and stakeholders clearly recognize that the principal is highly visible and effective in carrying out the policies and procedures of the school. Student success is enhanced through the development of relationships and teaming that work toward the positive behavior of students academically, behaviorally, and spiritually.

The principal is seen by all stakeholders as being supportive, providing opportunities for professional development, and treating the staff as genuine professionals. The staff clearly feels a part of the decision-making process. Teachers are included in the interviewing and hiring process of new faculty members. One teacher assessed the principal in the following words: "He is the core of support and enthusiasm for effective teaching." A parent had these words of support for the principal's effective leadership: "He is always in the classrooms, and it's amazing how many kids he knows and their individual characteristics." Another parent noted, "The principal is one of the single most important assets of this school."

The principal evaluates all staff through formal and informal evaluations. He visits each classroom at least two times a week to assess student and teacher performance. A common question according to one student is "What are you studying?" Through his leadership the continuous improvement team seeks input from students, alumni, staff, parents, and parishioners about how the school can continue to improve. In turn the staff and teachers address this feedback and make modifications in procedures and instruction where applicable for the benefit of student learning.

To foster continuous improvement, the administration has a number of practices that promote student achievement. Among these practices are the student folders with performance information that follow students from one grade level to the next. The weekly notes from the principal, the weekly teacher newsletters home, and the school website with the links to each teacher for weekly class responsibilities that students have to meet are just some of the practices in place to keep students and parents informed of student achievement. Every stakeholder testified to the usefulness of these practices that promote academic success.

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

- The various stakeholder groups are knowledgeable about the school improvement practices that are in place to promote student achievement.
- A student assistance team helps struggling students in achievement.
- The Principal Advisory Council assists in governing the organization of the school.
- The students clearly are involved in leadership opportunities to develop academically, behaviorally, and spiritually.
- DWP promotes student respect, dignity, and leadership capabilities.
- Resources are provided for technology to assist in the instructional and learning processes.
- The administration provides professional development opportunities that promote differentiated instruction, and this instructional model is utilized in the classrooms to enhance student achievement.
- The school has open communications for all stakeholders via the web page, weekly teacher newsletters, principal notes, Edline grades, open house curriculum nights, and parent-teacher conferences.
- The principal has the respect, admiration, and support of all stakeholder groups. He leads with the mission always at the forefront of his initiatives.
- The mentoring program for new faculty promotes camaraderie of staff and subsequent good relationships with students, parents, and all stakeholders.

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

- Investigate opportunities to employ an assistant principal who can be groomed to be an effective leader to carry forward the processes for school improvement. While the principal is a focused, effective, strong leader with clear support and admiration of all stakeholder groups, the caveat in this is that he must consider how systemic his practices are and how his expertise can be carried on if and when he is not able to lead the school improvement efforts since the school is growing rapidly.
- Establish a school improvement team to study the student performance data, establish school goals(s) that address deficiencies, and initiate an action plan that sustains the school improvement efforts.

Finding: Saint Patrick's Catholic Elementary School 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:

St. Patrick's Catholic School is firmly committed to its purpose of challenging every student to be his/her very best academically, behaviorally, and spiritually. The entire school community provides opportunities for students to acquire skills, knowledge, and dispositions to be highly successful in all aspects of their lives.

Teacher scheduling is arranged to allow time for collaboration among grade level teachers. Teacher mentors are assigned to new staff, and all teachers have time to work together during in-service time. Teachers team-teach across the curriculum integrating common themes, building on literacy skills, and appreciation for the arts. Cross-curricular opportunities are encouraged in "specials" classes.

Teachers report there is a strong collegial environment. They share and motivate each other. The leadership is supportive and challenges teachers to do their best. This strong, professional environment motivates many to seek additional resources and strategies to improve their teaching practices. New teachers receive staff development in technology, handwriting, VoWac vocabulary instruction, DWP, Six Trait Writing, and building relationships with their mentor. Student progress is monitored through checklists and passed to succeeding grade levels via individual student work folders. Grade level teachers meet with the previous years and next year's teachers to share specific student information. Many stakeholders, students, and support staff state that St. Patrick's is an exceptional place of learning because of its teachers.

Teachers employ a variety of differentiated instruction techniques. Many grade levels utilize resources and coordinate efforts through departmentalization allowing teachers to specialize at certain grade levels. Differentiation occurs in math and reading as a result of pre-test/post-test formats throughout the year. Results of the pre/post tests determine enrichment and reteaching activities. Teachers look for multiple ways for students to show mastery of specific learning goals. Teacher assistants are used effectively to assist students who need additional support. Teachers provide websites and/or additional resources for homework or remediation.

A variety of teaching methods is consistently incorporated. The preschool sees itself as an important beginning to the educational program. A guided reading model, VoWac, and Handwriting Without Tears are used at early grades and Six Trait Writing is used throughout the building. Math computation is a school-wide emphasis. Daily timed tests in math computation occur at all grade levels. Peer tutoring is utilized, and teacher-student conferences are available for student assistance. Teachers do make changes to lesson plans based on student performance. Teachers are not hesitant to change strategies or instruction to help students understand material, meeting needs of diverse learning. DWP is taught at school consistently and carries over into student conversations in lunchroom, recess, and at home. Teachers and students engage in many practices of DWP. The next level is connecting those practices with the total framework.

Students who need additional support in skills, knowledge, or dispositions have many opportunities for

remediation and/or extra practice. Zero hour is planned for next year to provide extra time or tutoring to students. Same day help is often provided based on teacher observation and student performance. A parent noted that the extra support provided for his son was nurturing, considering the whole child, not isolated skills. A Student Assistance Team (SAT) provides strategies and support for at-risk students. TEAM (Together, Everyone Achieves More) provides intervention and special education services to the special needs population of the school. Teachers feel that the TEAM structure is good but would like to know how to better utilize it. Modifications and accommodations are made to meet student needs and abilities.

There is a strong technology component, and it is integrated into the curriculum. Parents are satisfied with the technology integration and opportunities here and describe how students readily use thumb drives, PowerPoint, and websites to reinforce concepts, access information, or present their learning. Computers, projectors, and mimeos are in every classroom, and computer carts and a computer lab are available for student use. A great deal of work has been conducted on curriculum during the past four years. Changes have been made as a result of surveys, e.g., emphasis on math and science, grade-level expectations, and rigor.

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

- Rigor and high expectations are consistently embedded in the teaching and learning practices. Teachers challenge students to reach their potential, expand their horizons, and grow as individuals.
- Parents interviewed feel that academic rigor is superior to other schools. A parent noted that his son is challenged this year beyond other experiences in another school.
- Parents report students learn and work together.
- Student behavior is exceptional; they are polite, well mannered, respectful, and considerate.
- Differentiation is used effectively at multiple grade levels, and training is provided to all staff on this instructional approach.
- Flex-grouping based on pre/post test information is used to meet students' unique needs resulting in high student achievement.

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

- Align the skills checklists that is presently used to the essential learnings/skills identified in the continuous improvement profile. This will serve as a forum for identifying weaknesses and strengths of curriculum and/or instruction. Use this assessment data to make instructional and curricular choices in a systematic way to monitor progress of student performance.
- Promote higher-level thinking to provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations and implement it into instruction and curriculum. While high order thinking skills is mentioned in the documentation, there is little evidence of its application.
- Implement a formalized process to align instructional practice with curriculum, based on proven, research based, best practice.
- Develop a system for renewing and reviewing curriculum to provide consistency and uniformity in meeting learning goals and in providing resources.
- Communicate an appreciation for diversity. With the high academic performance of great numbers of students, sensitivity of academic diversity for students with learning difficulties must be cultivated.

Finding: Saint Patrick's Catholic Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" 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 school uses a comprehensive assessment system that monitors performance and uses these results to improve student performance and school effectiveness. Evidence of student growth is found in multiple years of Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) scores that show consistent and steady growth in all areas. Discussions about pre and post testing in areas of mathematics, Six Trait Writing, and reading indicate that student progress is occurring in these areas. Surveys are given yearly to students, parents, alumni, and staff to determine areas of growth and weakness. Extensive work has been done to develop curriculum for all departments and grade levels, with expectations and goals identified for each grade level.

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

- Through parent and alumni surveys as well as analyzing scores on the ITBS test, changes were made to create a more rigorous math curriculum.
- New staff members have been hired to meet the math needs of a growing population as well as the academic needs of the students.
- Math teachers give pre-tests to determine if students should participate in regular classroom learning activities or participate in enrichment learning activities.
- The Six Trait Writing curriculum collects evidence of writing skills at the beginning and end of every school year.
- Discussions with teachers reveal that differentiated instruction is implemented with every student, in every grade and every subject area.
- As students move on to the next grade level, conversations occur between and among grade level teachers to share successful strategies for all students.
- Working files that show the level of mastery in the academic areas of math and reading follow students from grade to grade.
- Every teacher cares about the academic, spiritual, and behavior success of each student.

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

- Compile and analyze student data to assess student progress and program effectiveness, e.g., a Six Trait Writing sample is scored holistically at the beginning and end of the year and put in the students' working folder.
- Establish procedures to double score student writing samples analytically to improve validity.
- Compile at least three years of trend data from the ITBS test results.. Use the Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) to show growth or decline in each academic area on the test. Build the knowledge and skills of faculty to increase their capacity to analyze and draw conclusions from student data.
- Create a profile/data committee of teachers to analyze data on a yearly basis and provide evidence of student learning. Use charts to organize data from tests and summarize the information included in each chart. Present this information to entire faculty and use these findings to inform instruction. Rick Stiggins has authored several books on assessment for learning. Any of his titles would be informative in learning more about this area.
- Align the school curriculum with Archdiocesan and state standards; make sure the alignments are

visible and noted on school curriculum guides.

Finding: Saint Patrick's Catholic Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems

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

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

St. Patrick's Catholic School started with and continues to have a strong commitment to providing the best possible learning environment for its students. Highly qualified faculty and staff are hired to embrace and carry out the vision of the school. Teachers come to St. Patrick's with strengths in their curricular subjects, with many years of experience and degrees, and with an ability to communicate with both parents and students. Students are challenged through differentiation, homework, projects, activities such as science fairs, show choir, forensics, Music In Our Schools, student newspaper, Bible Bowl, and student council. Struggling students gain needed assistance through the differentiation process, tutoring, small group instruction, and the TEAM concept. Materials are continually evaluated and adopted in a desire to provide a setting for optimum learning. A new math series was adopted to address a computation weakness. Technology is state of the art with mounted presentation devices, mimeos, and mobile laptop carts. As the school has grown rapidly over the last several years, building expansion has taken place – always with a look to future needs. Space is available for in-coming students and special needs.

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

- One of St. Patrick's greatest resources is its staff and community – from certified teachers to para-educators to volunteers and parents.
- Teachers are committed to supporting each other and St. Patrick's in their work with students. They collaboratively plan, share successes, and determine needs.
- Struggling students are helped through the TEAM process. Teachers work with students after school in tutoring sessions as well as provide needed assistance and differentiation throughout the day.
- Homework is assigned on an increasingly graduated scale through the grades.
- Teacher and parent/student communication is effectively carried out personally as well as through EdLine accounts for grades, assignments, and newsletters.
- Endorsed specialists work with students in the area of art, music, physical education, and media. computer science, and Spanish instruction is provided to all students kindergarten through grade eight.
- A part-time counselor works with both staff and students.
- Conscientious para-educators work in the classroom to directly aid student learning.
- There is a strong staff development approach so that everyone is “up-to-speed.”
- Teachers and para-educators meet before the start of the school year and also throughout the year on a regular basis to gain knowledge, exchange ideas, and to support each other's abilities.
- Mentors are assigned to new staff members to make the transition into the school as seamless as possible.
- The school staff has the full support of the principal and Home and School Association.

- Materials are in place to aid the teachers in carrying out their mission and vision.
- An updated math series to better meet students needs, a science and computer lab used for curriculum growth, and expanded media services all help students achieve and meet challenges.
- Technology is state of the art with mobile laptop carts on each of the floors, mounted presentation devices to enhance teacher lessons, mimeos to reach multiple learning styles, and wireless connectivity.
- Increased enrollment has created a demand for continual construction. In terms of physical space – St. Patrick’s has planned for increased numbers and needs.

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

- Structure the SAT process so that it identifies students with special needs, applies specific interventions, and tracks student progress all before making a program placement to provide documentation that follows the identified student. By building on their strong commitment to staff, parents, and tje learning environment, St. Patrick’s will be able to better evaluate physical and emotional needs, as well as academic needs. All students can learn and this school seems to have made a strong commitment to this principle.
- Demonstrate that all staff members practice the use of classroom accommodations to ensure fairness and equity for all learners.

Finding: Saint Patrick's Catholic Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

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

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

A commitment to effectively communicate and establish relationships with and among all stakeholders is highly evident and reflected in the variety of methods of communication and interaction. The school has the understanding, commitment, and support of all stakeholders. Through the website, Edline, email, newsletters, and surveys, school personnel actively promote and provide regular, systematic opportunities for collaboration to help students learn and advance improvement efforts.

Edline provides information about student performance. Email and weekly newsletters provide channels to inform and communicate among stakeholders. A high level of meaningful participation by most stakeholder groups is evident in the composition of organizations involved in the operation of the school such as the Continuous Improvement Committee, Home and School Organization, and Development Committee. Activities such as the mentoring of new teachers, common planning times for teachers, lunches with parents, and curriculum night demonstrate the efforts to foster relationships among and between stakeholders.

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

- Effective communication among and between its stakeholders is fostered. The website provides an excellent video of the school and its expectations for student learning. Teacher web pages promote

consistent up-to-date information for stakeholders. The use of Edline advises parents and students of their performance. The Hand 'n Hand newsletter is a collaborative effort by all stakeholders to communicate information about the school, and it establishes relationships among teachers, students, and parents. Teacher weekly newsletters and principal notes online promote communication about expectations and academic goals. The use of email by teachers and parents engages each in establishing relationships and communication. Surveys distributed to parents, students, teachers, alumni, and parishioners establish an avenue for the entire St. Patrick's community to participate.

- Establishing relationships with stakeholders is a priority. Home and School references the mission statement of the school so that contributions support programs that adhere to the vision. Parents are actively involved in the school through invitations to lunch with their child, the open door policy, and memberships in school organizations.
- Relationships among the staff are encouraged through the mentoring program, the morning prayer, and the scheduling of classes so grade level teachers can collaborate on instruction.

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

- Systematically organize data on student performance and communicate this information to stakeholders.
- Develop a procedure to coordinate dates for administering tests and presenting projects in the intermediate and junior high. Communicate this information to parents to enhance the collaborative effort at home to meet the school's expectations.

Finding: Saint Patrick's Catholic Elementary School 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 commitment to continuous improvement is evident. The school follows the Archdiocese of Omaha's continuous improvement process. The Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) team consists of two school board members, two parents, two teachers, and the administrator. The school collects data using an annual survey distributed to parents, students, teachers, graduates, and parishioners. The CIP team develops goals based on the survey, and then identifies those individuals responsible for carrying out the goals. The staff is involved in the process and is encouraged to give feedback. The CIP team publishes a report for the stakeholders, identifying the areas of strength and the areas of concerns.

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

- All stakeholders are involved in the continuous improvement process and kept informed of the results.
- Collaborative planning time is scheduled for teachers and professional development opportunities are encouraged and provided.

- Goals and interventions are developed to improve student performance. Teachers participate in collaborative sharing between grade levels each year. In addition, each student has a work folder containing math, reading, and writing assessment data and this folder follows the student through each grade.

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

- Incorporate data from normative and formative tests, teacher assessments, and teacher input to help identify goals.
- Develop an action plan with a timeline and an assessment tool to measure growth.
- Collect data to evaluate the process and the implementation of the interventions.
- Develop a systematic process for continuous improvement and include an evaluation component for each strand.

Finding: Saint Patrick's Catholic Elementary School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Conclusion

The commendations and recommendations 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 recommendations 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 several recommendations 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 recommendations.

The Quality Assurance Review Team expresses appreciation to Donald Ridder, members of the professional staff, students, parents and other community representatives for their hospitality throughout the visit. The team wishes the school and its students much success in the quest for excellence through NCA CASI accreditation with AdvancED.

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Margaret McInteer, Chair (Nebraska Department of Education)
- Ceceila Smith, Team Member (St. James-Seton Elementary School)
- Dennis McGuire, Team Member (Nebraska Dept of Education)
- Diane Flynn, Team Member
- Linda Coates, Team Member (St. Margaret Mary Elementary School)
- Rhonda Martin, Team Member (Spring Ridge Elementary School)
- Sofia Kock, Team Member (Holy Name Catholic Elementary)
- Sue Fees, Team Member (Ezra Millard Elementary School)
- Mrs. Vickie Kauffold, Team Member (Bishop Neumann Jr/Sr High School)

AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

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

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.