



# Accreditation Standards for Quality Schools



**ADVANCED ED**  
Advancing Excellence in Education Worldwide

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## ABOUT ADVANCED

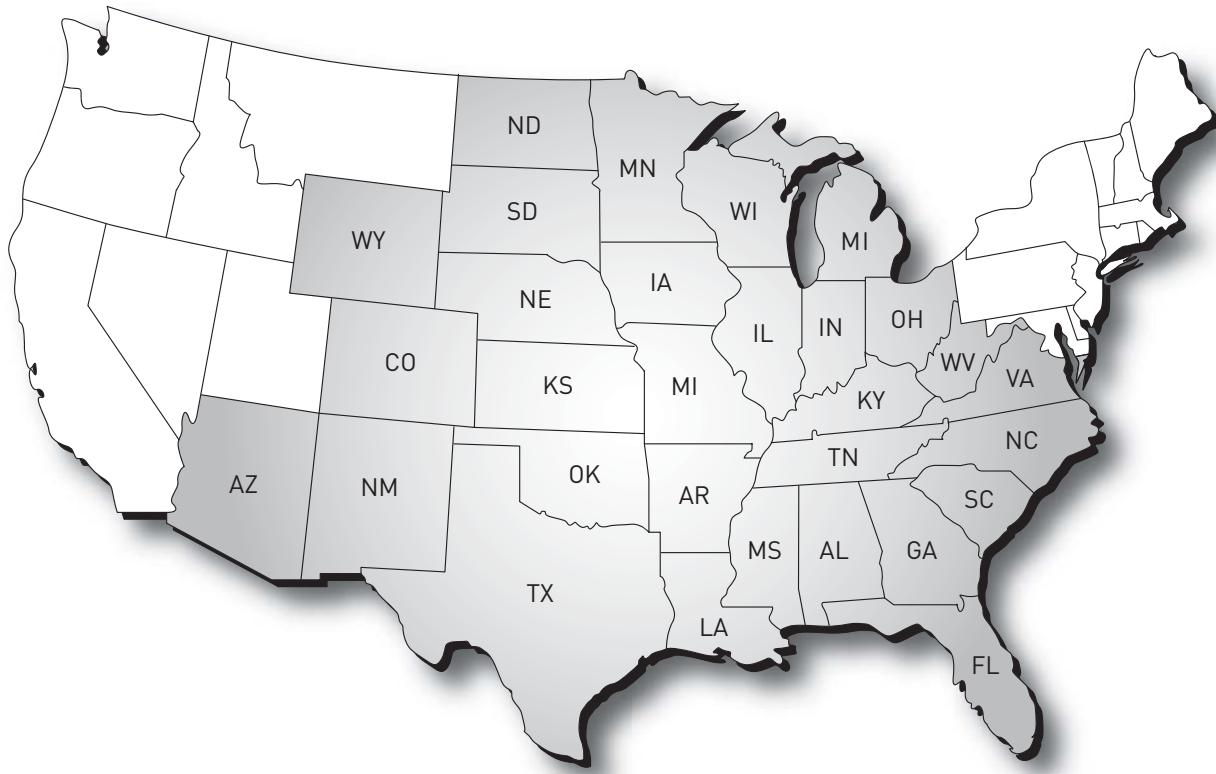
In April 2006, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) came together to form one strong and unified organization under the name Advanced.



Dedicated to advancing excellence in education, Advanced works to:

- *Help schools maximize student success*
- *Build the capacity of schools and school systems to achieve excellence through high standards, quality assurance, and continuous improvement*
- *Bring together research and resources for student, school, and system improvement*

## NCA CASI AND SACS CASI SERVE SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS ACROSS THE NATION AND THE WORLD



NCA CASI and SACS CASI also serve:

- Navajo Nation
- Department of Defense Educational Activity (DoDEA)
- Latin America

## ABOUT ADVANCED (CONTINUED)

AdvancED is the world's largest education community, representing over 23,000 public and private schools and districts in 30 states and 65 countries and serving over 15 million students. Building on the strong state presence and volunteer networks of NCA CASI and SACS CASI, AdvancED leverages its size and global professional learning community to deliver the powerful combination of accreditation, research, and continuous improvement in a customized way to every school and district it serves.

As schools and districts gain access to the enhanced benefits of the global AdvancED community, they will continue to receive accreditation under the brand names of NCA CASI and SACS CASI. The NCA CASI and SACS CASI accreditation seals are recognized across the United States and around the world and will continue to be the seals used by AdvancED to bestow accreditation.

### Background

**NCA CASI and SACS CASI.** Founded in 1895, NCA CASI and SACS CASI accredit public and private schools in 30 states, the Navajo Nation, the Department of Defense Schools, and Latin America.

**NSSE.** NSSE is a non-profit educational research and development organization founded in 1933 to support the work of the regional school accreditation commissions in the United States. NSSE provides educational leaders with state-of-the-art resources, tools, and support services to enhance and promote student growth and school improvement through accreditation.

### AdvancED Accreditation Standards for Quality Schools

NCA CASI and SACS CASI, with research support from NSSE, developed the *AdvancED Accreditation Standards for Quality Schools*. The standards build on NCA CASI's and SACS CASI's standards. They are based on research and were developed with broad input from practitioners and education experts. The standards apply to all schools within the 30-state region of NCA CASI and SACS CASI. Schools seeking NCA CASI or SACS CASI accreditation must meet these standards, engage in continuous improvement, and host quality assurance reviews.



## BACKGROUND ON ACCREDITATION

**Accreditation is a voluntary method of quality assurance developed more than 100 years ago by American universities and secondary schools. The goal of accreditation is to evaluate, verify, and improve an institution's quality.**

*To be accredited, schools must:*

### **1) Meet high standards**

The standards require that the school has a clear vision and purpose; has effective and responsive leadership; has a rigorous curriculum taught through sound, research-based methods; collects, reports, and uses performance results; provides adequate resources and support for its educational programs; and values and communicates with its stakeholders.

### **2) Engage in continuous improvement**

To demonstrate continuous improvement, schools must implement an improvement plan based on student performance and school/community data that includes clear goals for raising the achievement of all students. Schools also must document growth in student performance and organizational effectiveness.

### **3) Demonstrate quality assurance through external review**

Schools must be evaluated by a team of professionals from outside the school on a periodic basis. The team engages the school staff in a healthy, professional dialogue about school improvement efforts, validates that the school meets the standards for accreditation, and provides feedback and makes recommendations concerning future efforts to improve student performance and organizational effectiveness.



## BENEFITS OF ACCREDITATION

### Mark of Quality

External recognition of your school's commitment to quality

### Proven Processes for Improvement

Clear, intuitive processes for school improvement that are grounded in best practices from the education and business fields

### Vehicle to Meet Local, State, National and appropriate International Requirements

Framework and support system to help meet local, state, national and appropriate international requirements

### Professional Development

Annual conferences and state workshops on all aspects of school improvement

### Peer Review and Support

Opportunity to gain valuable input, validation, and support from peers

### Best Practices

Connection to the best practices of over 23,000 public and private schools

### Technical Assistance

Customized assistance to maximize improvement efforts

### Publications, Websites, and Resources

Guides, handbooks, primers, resources, tools, and websites aimed at enhancing improvement efforts

### Reciprocity of Credits

Transferability of credits for students from school to school

### Access

Greater accessibility to sports programs, federal loans, scholarships, postsecondary education, and military programs that require regional accreditation





## DEFINING THE STANDARDS, INDICATORS, AND IMPACT STATEMENTS

The **seven standards** described in this document 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 a higher level 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 has corresponding indicators and an impact statement.

The **indicators** are operational definitions or descriptions of exemplary practices and processes. Together, the indicators provide a comprehensive picture of each standard.

The **impact statement** describes characteristics, processes, and actions that would be observable and verifiable in a school that effectively implements the standard.

The standards, indicators, and impact statements focus on systems within a school and systematic methods of attaining high student performance and organizational effectiveness. The standards and indicators are not isolated, but are systemic. They are related to and support other standards and indicators. For example: Using student assessment data for making decisions (4.3) is an indicator for Standard 4, Documenting and Using Results, because it is most closely related. However, data-based decision making is also an important aspect of effective leadership. A complete set of indicators for effective leadership can only be found when all of the standards are considered together. No one standard or set of indicators is complete without considering all seven as a collective whole. Consideration of this systemic “connectedness” is essential in understanding and applying the standards and indicators.



## USING THE STANDARDS AS AN ONGOING SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Accreditation is an ongoing process of meeting standards, continuous improvement, and quality assurance demonstrated through internal and external review.

Through the accreditation process, the school staff continuously reviews the standards and indicators to ensure that the standards are being met and to identify areas that the school may need to strengthen or improve. This review requires the school to identify the data, information, evidence, and documented results that validate that it is meeting each standard.



# ADVANCED ACCREDITATION STANDARDS FOR QUALITY SCHOOLS



## STANDARD 1: 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.**



### Quality School Indicators

*In fulfillment of this standard, the school:*

- 1.1 Establishes a vision for the school in collaboration with its stakeholders
- 1.2 Communicates the vision and purpose to build stakeholder understanding and support
- 1.3 Identifies goals to advance the vision
- 1.4 Develops and continuously maintains a profile of the school, its students, and the community
- 1.5 Ensures that the school's vision and purpose guide the teaching and learning process
- 1.6 Reviews its vision and purpose systematically and revises them when appropriate

### Impact Statement

A school is successful in meeting this standard when it commits to a shared purpose and direction. The school establishes expectations for student learning aligned with the school's vision that is supported by school personnel and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and school effectiveness. The school's vision guides allocations of time and human, material, and fiscal resources.

## STANDARD 2: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

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



### GOVERNANCE

#### Quality School Indicators

*In fulfillment of this standard, the school operates under the jurisdiction of a governing board that:*

- 2.1** Establishes policies and procedures that provide for the effective operation of the school
- 2.2** Recognizes and preserves the executive, administrative, and leadership prerogatives of the administrative head of the school
- 2.3** Ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations

### LEADERSHIP

#### Quality School Indicators

*In fulfillment of this standard, the school has leadership that:*

- 2.4** Employs a system that provides for analysis and review of student performance and school effectiveness
- 2.5** Fosters a learning community
- 2.6** Provides teachers and students opportunities to lead
- 2.7** Provides stakeholders meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership
- 2.8** Controls curricular and extracurricular activities that are sponsored by the school

**STANDARD 2 (CONTINUED)**

- 2.9** Responds to community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction
- 2.10** Implements an evaluation system that provides for the professional growth of all personnel

**Impact Statement**

A school is successful in meeting this standard when it has leaders who are advocates for the school's vision and improvement efforts. The leaders provide direction and allocate resources to implement curricular and co-curricular programs that enable students to achieve expectations for their learning. Leaders encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for school improvement among stakeholders. The school's policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation.



## STANDARD 3: TEACHING AND LEARNING

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



### Quality School Indicators

*In fulfillment of this standard, the school:*

- 3.1** Develops and implements curriculum based on clearly-defined expectations for student learning
- 3.2** Promotes active involvement of students in the learning process, including opportunities for them to explore application of higher-order thinking skills and investigate new approaches to applying their learning
- 3.3** Gathers, analyzes, and uses data and research in making curricular and instructional choices
- 3.4** Designs and uses instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that are research-based and reflective of best practice
- 3.5** Offers a curriculum that challenges each student to excel, reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity
- 3.6** Allocates and protects instructional time to support student learning
- 3.7** Provides for articulation and alignment between and among all levels of schools
- 3.8** Implements interventions to help students meet expectations for student learning
- 3.9** Monitors school climate and takes appropriate steps to ensure that it is conducive to student learning
- 3.10** Provides comprehensive information and media services that support the curricular and instructional programs

**STANDARD 3** (CONTINUED)

**3.11** Ensures that all students and staff members have regular and ready access to instructional technology and a comprehensive materials collection that supports the curricular and instructional program

**Impact Statement**

A school is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning that provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Teachers use proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process. Teachers provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations. Teachers give students feedback to improve their performance.





## STANDARD 4: 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.**



### Quality School Indicators

*In fulfillment of this standard, the school:*

- 4.1 Establishes performance measures for student learning that yield information that is reliable, valid, and bias free
- 4.2 Develops and implements a comprehensive assessment system for assessing progress toward meeting the expectations for student learning
- 4.3 Uses student assessment data for making decisions for continuous improvement of teaching and learning processes
- 4.4 Conducts a systematic analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness and uses the results to improve student performance
- 4.5 Communicates the results of student performance and school effectiveness to all stakeholders
- 4.6 Uses comparison and trend data of student performance from comparable schools in evaluating its effectiveness
- 4.7 Demonstrates verifiable growth in student performance
- 4.8 Maintains a secure, accurate, and complete student record system in accordance with state and federal regulations

### Impact Statement

A school is successful in meeting this standard when it uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly defined performance measures. The system is used to assess student performance on expectations for student learning, evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, and determine interventions to improve student performance. The assessment system yields timely and accurate information that is meaningful and useful to school leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders in understanding student performance, school effectiveness, and the results of improvement efforts.

## STANDARD 5: RESOURCES AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

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



### Quality School Indicators

*In fulfillment of this standard, the school:*

- 5.1** Recruits, employs, and mentors qualified professional staff that are capable of fulfilling assigned roles and responsibilities
- 5.2** Assigns professional staff responsibilities based on their qualifications (i.e., professional preparation, ability, knowledge, and experience)
- 5.3** Ensures that all staff participate in a continuous program of professional development
- 5.4** Provides and assigns staff that are sufficient in number to meet the vision and purpose of the school
- 5.5** Budgets sufficient resources to support its educational programs and to implement its plans for improvement
- 5.6** Monitors all financial transactions through a recognized, regularly audited accounting system
- 5.7** Maintains the site, facilities, services, and equipment to provide an environment that is safe and orderly for all occupants
- 5.8** Possesses a written security and crisis management plan with appropriate training for stakeholders
- 5.9** Ensures that each student has access to guidance services that include, but are not limited to, counseling, appraisal, mentoring, staff consulting, referral, and educational and career planning
- 5.10** Provides appropriate support for students with special needs

### Impact Statement

A school is successful in meeting this standard when it has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, to meet special needs, and to comply with applicable regulations. The school employs and allocates staff that are well qualified for their assignments. The school provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff to improve their effectiveness. The school ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

## STANDARD 6: STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

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

### Quality School Indicators

*In fulfillment of this standard, the school:*

- 6.1** Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning
- 6.2** Has formal channels to listen to and communicate with stakeholders
- 6.3** Solicits the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance the work of the school
- 6.4** Communicates the expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to all stakeholders
- 6.5** Provides information about students, their performance, and school effectiveness that is meaningful and useful to stakeholders

### Impact Statement

A school is successful in meeting this standard when it has the understanding, commitment, and support of stakeholders. School personnel seek opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership among stakeholders to help students learn and advance improvement efforts.



## STANDARD 7: COMMITMENT TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

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



### Quality School Indicators

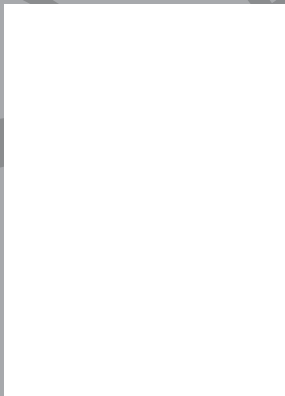
*In fulfillment of this standard, the school:*

- 7.1** Engages in a continuous process of improvement 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)
- 7.2** Engages stakeholders in the processes of continuous improvement
- 7.3** Ensures that plans for continuous improvement are aligned with the vision and purpose of the school and expectations for student learning
- 7.4** Provides professional development for school personnel to help them implement improvement interventions to achieve improvement goals
- 7.5** Monitors and communicates the results of improvement efforts to stakeholders
- 7.6** Evaluates and documents the effectiveness and impact of its continuous process of improvement

### Impact Statement

A school is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns the functions of the school with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained and the school demonstrates progress in improving student performance and school effectiveness. New improvement efforts are informed by the results of earlier efforts through reflection and assessment of the improvement process.

## APPENDIX



## ACCREDITATION STANDARDS FOR QUALITY SCHOOLS: RESEARCH ALIGNMENT

The Accreditation Standards for Quality Schools are aligned with current educational research and best practices. Research supporting the accreditation standards involves factors within the scope of a school or school district that directly contribute to student achievement. Original research findings, research syntheses, and meta-analyses, as well as research from the domains of policy and practice, support the accreditation standards. The research base and information concerning the methodology that yielded the taxonomy for school improvement that describes the research base was identified by the National Study of School Evaluation. A publication presenting the research base, *Technical Guide to School and District Factors Impacting Student Learning* published by NSSE, is available online at [www.nsse.org](http://www.nsse.org)

The taxonomy identifies three primary categories and twenty-nine subcategories of factors impacting student achievement. To give the taxonomy utility for school improvement, the categories are described as “core tasks” to improve a school or school district. The NSSE research indicates that a school or school district seeking to improve student achievement needs to focus on three core tasks:

- **Ensure Desired Results** — by expecting results and monitoring performance toward achieving desired results
- **Improve Teaching and Learning** — by supporting students in their learning and maximizing teachers’ effectiveness
- **Foster a Culture of Improvement** — by developing a learning community and leading for improvement

The taxonomy identifies subcategories of “effective practices” that contribute to each of the three core tasks. Collectively, these effective practices are powerful levers for improving student achievement.



## RESEARCH ALIGNMENT (CONTINUED)

The seven Accreditation Standards for Quality Schools are represented in each of the three core tasks.

## CORE TASK #1: ENSURE DESIRED RESULTS

Schools and districts ensure desired results for student learning by expecting certain results and then monitoring performance in achieving them. Schools or districts determine what they desire as performance results based on their expectations for student learning. Schools or districts that expect and ensure certain results:

- Implement a vision for student learning through goals and strategies
- Maintain high expectations for student achievement
- Maintain a relentless focus on improving student learning that permeates all levels of the school or district
- Are compelled by a common belief that, collectively, staff and other stakeholders can impact the desired results of the school or district

In addition, for a school or district to effectively monitor performance in order to produce the results it expects, it will:

- Use data to inform decision-making about teaching and learning
- Use a comprehensive assessment system to provide feedback for improvement in instructional practices and student performance
- Use classroom-based assessments to provide robust measures of students' academic, cognitive, and metacognitive skills
- Identify performance targets, indicators, and measures for comparing and improving a school or district's effectiveness
- Take appropriate and timely action to improve areas of identified needs



## RESEARCH ALIGNMENT (CONTINUED)

## CORE TASK #2: IMPROVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

The ultimate goal of the school improvement process is to improve teaching and learning. Schools and districts that support students in their learning:

- Maintain school or district-wide expectations for student learning that reflect academic, cognitive, and metacognitive skills
- Deliver on these expectations for student learning through a curriculum that is coherent and rigorous
- Align an assessment system with curriculum that is enacted in the classroom through instruction
- Support the equitable opportunity of students to learn through individualization and differentiation
- Provide student support services and special programs to optimize individual student learning
- Support a student learning community that includes student involvement beyond the classroom and that offers a safe environment
- Involve families and the community in supporting children as learners

Equally important as supporting students is the district's support for teachers and the practices that maximize teachers' effectiveness. These practices help teachers:

- Use instructional strategies that provide students with focus, feedback, and sufficient opportunities to master skills
- Use appropriate strategies to assess students' academic, cognitive, and metacognitive skills
- Adapt instruction to meet individual needs and engage learners
- Maximize the use of time for instruction
- Create classroom environments conducive to learning
- Optimize technology and multimedia as learning tools





## RESEARCH ALIGNMENT (CONTINUED)

**CORE TASK #3:  
FOSTER A CULTURE OF IMPROVEMENT**

In addition to ensuring desired results and improving teaching and learning, the NSSE research indicates that schools and districts must cultivate an environment that has improvement embedded in its daily practices. The professional learning community will influence the impact of any improvement initiative. In order to foster a culture of improvement, learning community members:

- Share a common vision and goals that have student learning as the focus
- Improve individual and collective performance by coming together regularly for learning, decision-making, problem solving, and celebration
- Enhance continuously individual effectiveness through inquiry, practice, and peer reflection
- Support a culture of collegiality, collaboration, respect, and trust

Leaders of a professional learning community have a unique responsibility to:

- Share leadership for the improvement of teaching and learning throughout the school
- Articulate a compelling need for improvement and provide meaningful ways for the professional learning community to focus on its performance
- Engage in practices that support the ongoing improvement of teaching and learning



## RESEARCH ALIGNMENT (CONTINUED)

### ORGANIZATIONAL CONDITIONS

The National Study of School Evaluation's research also identified a number of "organizational conditions" within a school system that contribute to improved student achievement. These organizational conditions for improving schools and school districts provide a solid foundation for continuous improvement.



- **Quality Teachers** — the recruitment, placement, and professional development of teachers to achieve the school or district's vision of student learning
- **Effective Leadership** — the leader's decisions and actions to support the vision of student learning
- **Quality Information** — the collection, management, and use of information to enable the school or school district to make informed decisions, take specific actions, and assess the results of improvement efforts that support the school's or district's vision of student learning
- **Policies and Procedures that Foster and Sustain Improvement** — the school's or district's development and implementation of policies and procedures that support improvement efforts
- **Resources and Support Systems to Sustain Improvement** — the allocation and deployment of human, technology, and material resources to target areas for improvement

All five organizational conditions are embodied in the Accreditation Standards for Quality Schools.

**TABLE 1: ALIGNMENT OF QUALITY SCHOOL INDICATORS AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICES**

**Alignment of the quality indicators for the accreditation standards with the effective practices that comprise the core tasks and the organizational conditions is outlined in Tables 1 and 2. The numbers in the tables pertain to the standards and corresponding indicators.**

Ensure Desired Results	Quality School Indicators
<i>Expecting Results</i>	
<p><b>Implement a vision for student learning through goals and strategies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1.1</b> Establishes a vision for the school in collaboration with its stakeholder</li> <li><b>1.3</b> Identifies goals to advance the vision</li> <li><b>1.5</b> Ensures that the school’s vision and purpose guide the teaching and learning process</li> <li><b>5.4</b> Provides and assigns staff that are sufficient in number to meet the vision and purpose of the school</li> <li><b>7.1</b> Engages in a continuous process of improvement that: articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing; maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community; employs goals and interventions to improve student performance; and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next</li> <li><b>7.3</b> Ensures that plans for continuous improvement are aligned with the vision and purpose of the school and expectations for student learning</li> </ul>
<p><b>Maintain high expectations for student achievement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>3.1</b> Develops and implements curriculum based on clearly defined expectations for student learning</li> <li><b>3.5</b> Offers a curriculum that challenges each student to excel, reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity</li> </ul>
<p><b>Maintain a relentless focus on improving student learning that permeates all levels of the school or district</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1.5</b> Ensures that the school’s vision and purpose guide the teaching and learning process</li> <li><b>3.5</b> Offers a curriculum that challenges each student to excel, reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity</li> <li><b>3.7</b> Provides for articulation and alignment between and among all levels of schools</li> <li><b>7.1</b> Engages in a continuous process of improvement that: articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing; maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community; employs goals and interventions to improve student performance; and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next</li> </ul>
<p><b>Be compelled by a common belief that staff and other stakeholders collectively can impact the desired results of the school or district</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1.2</b> Communicates the vision and purpose to build stakeholder understanding and support</li> <li><b>6.1</b> Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning</li> </ul>

**TABLE 1** (CONTINUED)

Ensure Desired Results	Quality School Indicators
<i>Monitoring Performance</i>	
<p><b>Use data to inform decision-making about teaching and learning</b></p>	<p><b>1.4</b> Develops and continuously maintains a profile of the school, its students, and the community</p> <p><b>3.3</b> Gathers, analyzes, and uses data and research in making curricular and instructional choices</p> <p><b>4.3</b> Uses student assessment data for making decisions for continuous improvement of teaching and learning processes</p> <p><b>4.4</b> Conducts a systematic analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness and uses the results to improve student performance</p> <p><b>7.1</b> Engages in a continuous process of improvement that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing; maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community; employs goals and interventions to improve student performance; and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next</p>
<p><b>Use a comprehensive assessment system that provides feedback for improvement in instructional practices and student performance</b></p>	<p><b>2.4</b> Employs a system that provides for analysis and review of student performance and school effectiveness</p> <p><b>2.10</b> Implements an evaluation system that provides for the professional growth of all personnel</p> <p><b>4.2</b> Develops and implements a comprehensive system for assessing progress toward meeting the expectations for student learning</p> <p><b>4.4</b> Conducts a systematic analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness and uses the results to improve student performance</p> <p><b>7.5</b> Monitors and communicates the results of improvement efforts to stakeholders</p> <p><b>7.6</b> Evaluates and documents the effectiveness and impact of its continuous process of improvement</p>
<p><b>Use classroom-based assessments to provide robust measures of students' academic, cognitive, and metacognitive skills</b></p>	<p><b>4.2</b> Develops and implements a comprehensive system for assessing progress toward meeting the expectations for student learning</p>
<p><b>Identify performance targets, indicators, and measures for comparing and improving a school's or district's effectiveness</b></p>	<p><b>4.1</b> Establishes performance measures for student learning that yield information that are reliable, valid, and bias free</p> <p><b>4.6</b> Uses comparison and trend data of student performance from comparable schools in evaluating its effectiveness</p>
<p><b>Take appropriate and timely action to improve areas of identified needs</b></p>	<p><b>3.9</b> Monitors school climate and takes appropriate steps to ensure that it is conducive to student learning</p> <p><b>7.1</b> Engages in a continuous process of improvement that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing; maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community; employs goals and interventions to improve student performance; and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next</p>

**TABLE 1** (CONTINUED)

Improve Teaching and Learning	Quality School Indicators
<i>Supporting Student Learning</i>	
<p><b>Maintain school- or districtwide expectations for student learning that reflect academic, cognitive, and metacognitive skills</b></p>	<p><b>3.1</b> Develops and implements curriculum based on clearly defined expectations for student learning</p> <p><b>6.4</b> Communicates the expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to all stakeholders</p>
<p><b>Deliver on these expectations for student learning through a curriculum that is coherent and rigorous</b></p>	<p><b>3.1</b> Develops and implements curriculum based on clearly defined expectations for student learning</p> <p><b>3.2</b> Promotes active involvement of students in the learning process, including opportunities for them to explore application of higher-order thinking skills and investigate new approaches in applying their learning</p> <p><b>4.7</b> Demonstrates verifiable growth in student performance</p>
<p><b>Align an assessment system with curriculum that is enacted in the classroom through instruction</b></p>	<p><b>3.1</b> Develops and implements curriculum based on clearly defined expectations for student learning</p> <p><b>4.2</b> Develops and implements a comprehensive system for assessing progress toward meeting the expectations for student learning</p>
<p><b>Support the equitable opportunity of students to learn through individualization and differentiation</b></p>	<p><b>3.5</b> Offers a curriculum that challenges each student to excel, reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity</p>
<p><b>Provide student support services and special programs to optimize individual student learning</b></p>	<p><b>5.9</b> Ensures that each student has access to services that include, but are not limited to, counseling, appraisal, staff consulting, referral, and educational and career planning</p> <p><b>5.10</b> Provides appropriate support for students with special needs</p>
<p><b>Support a student learning community that includes student involvement beyond the classroom and offers a safe environment</b></p>	<p><b>5.7</b> Maintains the site, facilities, services, and equipment to provide an environment that is safe and orderly for all occupants</p> <p><b>6.1</b> Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning</p>
<p><b>Involve families and the community to support children as learners</b></p>	<p><b>2.7</b> Provides stakeholders meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership</p> <p><b>6.1</b> Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning</p>

**TABLE 1** (CONTINUED)

Improve Teaching and Learning	Quality School Indicators
<i>Maximizing Teaching Effectiveness</i>	
Use instructional strategies that provide students with focus, feedback, and sufficient opportunities to master skills	<p><b>3.4</b> Designs and uses instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that are research-based and reflective of best practice</p>
Use appropriate strategies to assess the performance of students' academic, cognitive, and meta-cognitive skills	<p><b>3.4</b> Designs and uses instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that are research-based and reflective of best practice</p> <p><b>4.2</b> Develops and implements a comprehensive system for assessing progress toward meeting the expectations for student learning</p> <p><b>4.4</b> Conducts a systematic analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness and uses the results to improve student performance</p>
Adapt instruction to meet individual needs and engage learners	<p><b>3.2</b> Promotes active involvement of students in the learning process, including opportunities for them to explore application of higher-order thinking skills and investigate new approaches in applying their learning</p> <p><b>3.4</b> Designs and uses instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that are research-based and reflective of best practice</p> <p><b>3.8</b> Implements interventions to help students meet expectations for student learning</p>
Maximize the use of time for instruction	<p><b>3.6</b> Allocates and protects instructional time to support student learning</p>
Create classroom environments conducive to learning	<p><b>3.2</b> Promotes active involvement of students in the learning process, including opportunities for them to explore application of higher-order thinking skills and investigate new approaches in applying their learning</p> <p><b>3.4</b> Designs and uses instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that are research-based and reflective of best practice</p>
Optimize technology and multi-media as learning tools	<p><b>3.10</b> Provides comprehensive information and media services that support the curricular and instructional programs</p> <p><b>3.11</b> Ensures that all students and staff members have regular and ready access to instructional technology and a comprehensive materials collection that support the curricular and instructional program</p>

**TABLE 1** (CONTINUED)

Foster a Culture of Improvement	Quality School Indicators
<i>Developing a Professional Learning Community</i>	
<p><b>Share a common vision and goals that have student learning as the focus</b></p>	<p><b>1.1</b> Establishes a vision for the school in collaboration with its stakeholders  <b>1.2</b> Communicates the vision and purpose to build stakeholder understanding and support  <b>2.5</b> Fosters a learning community  <b>6.4</b> Communicates the expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to all stakeholders</p>
<p><b>Improve individual and collective performance by coming together regularly for learning, decision making, problem solving, and celebration</b></p>	<p><b>2.5</b> Fosters a learning community  <b>2.7</b> Provides stakeholders meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership  <b>3.7</b> Provides for articulation and alignment between and among all levels of schools  <b>5.3</b> Ensures that all staff participate in a continuous program of professional development  <b>6.1</b> Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning  <b>7.4</b> Provides professional development for school personnel to help them implement interventions to achieve improvement goals</p>
<p><b>Enhance continuously individual effectiveness through inquiry, practice, and peer reflection</b></p>	<p><b>2.5</b> Fosters a learning community  <b>5.3</b> Ensures that all staff participate in a continuous program of professional development  <b>7.4</b> Provides professional development for school personnel to help them implement interventions to achieve improvement goals</p>
<p><b>Support a culture of collegiality, collaboration, respect, and trust</b></p>	<p><b>2.5</b> Fosters a learning community  <b>3.9</b> Monitors school climate and takes appropriate steps to ensure that it is conducive to student learning  <b>6.1</b> Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning  <b>7.2</b> Engages stakeholders in the processes of continuous improvement</p>

**TABLE 1** (CONTINUED)

Foster a Culture of Improvement	Quality School Indicators
<i>Leading for Improvement</i>	
<p><b>Share leadership for the improvement of teaching and learning throughout the school and district</b></p>	<p><b>2.4</b> Employs a system that provides for analysis and review of student performance and school effectiveness</p> <p><b>2.5</b> Fosters a learning community</p> <p><b>2.6</b> Provides teachers and students opportunities to lead</p> <p><b>2.9</b> Responds to community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction</p> <p><b>7.1</b> Engages in a continuous process of improvement that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing; maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community; employs goals and interventions to improve student performance; and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next</p>
<p><b>Articulate a compelling need for improvement and provide meaningful ways for the professional learning community to focus on its performance</b></p>	<p><b>2.7</b> Provides stakeholders meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership</p> <p><b>5.3</b> Ensures that all staff participate in a continuous program of professional development</p> <p><b>7.1</b> Engages in a continuous process of improvement that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing; maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community; employs goals and interventions to improve student performance; and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next</p>
<p><b>Engage in practices that support the ongoing improvement of teaching and learning</b></p>	<p><b>5.3</b> Ensures that all staff participate in a continuous program of professional development</p> <p><b>7.1</b> Engages in a continuous process of improvement that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing; maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community; employs goals and interventions to improve student performance; and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next</p> <p><b>7.4</b> Provides professional development for school personnel to help them implement interventions to achieve improvement goals</p>



**TABLE 2: ALIGNMENT OF QUALITY SCHOOL INDICATORS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONDITIONS OF IMPROVING SCHOOLS**

Organizational Conditions	Quality School Indicators
<p><b>Quality Teachers</b></p>	<p><b>5.1</b> Recruits, employs, and mentors qualified professional staff that are capable of fulfilling assigned roles and responsibilities</p> <p><b>5.2</b> Assigns professional staff responsibilities based on their qualifications (i.e., professional preparation, ability, knowledge, and experience)</p> <p><b>5.4</b> Provides and assigns staff that are sufficient in number to meet the vision and purpose of the school</p>
<p><b>Effective Leadership</b></p>	<p><b>2.1</b> Establishes policies and procedures that provide for the effective operation of the school</p> <p><b>2.2</b> Recognizes and preserves the executive, administrative, and leadership prerogatives of the administrative head of the school</p> <p><b>2.3</b> Ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations</p> <p><b>2.4</b> Employs a system that provides for analysis and review of student performance and school effectiveness</p> <p><b>2.5</b> Fosters a learning community</p> <p><b>2.6</b> Provides teachers and students opportunities to lead</p> <p><b>2.7</b> Provides stakeholders meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership</p> <p><b>2.8</b> Controls curricular and extracurricular activities that are sponsored by the school</p> <p><b>2.9</b> Responds to community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction</p> <p><b>3.7</b> Provides for articulation and alignment between and among all levels of schools</p> <p><b>3.9</b> Monitors school climate and takes appropriate steps to ensure that it is conducive to student learning</p> <p><b>5.6</b> Monitors all financial transactions through a recognized, regularly audited accounting system</p> <p><b>5.8</b> Possesses a written security and crisis management plan with appropriate training for stakeholders</p> <p><b>6.1</b> Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning</p> <p><b>6.2</b> Has formal channels to listen to and communicate with stakeholders</p> <p><b>6.3</b> Solicits the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance the work of the school</p> <p><b>6.4</b> Communicates the expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to all stakeholders</p> <p><b>6.5</b> Provides information about students, their performance, and school effectiveness that is meaningful and useful to stakeholders</p>

**TABLE 2: (CONTINUED)**

Organizational Conditions	Quality School Indicators
<p><b>Quality Information</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1.4</b> Develops and continuously maintains a profile of the school, its students, and the community</li> <li><b>3.3</b> Gathers, analyzes, and uses data and research in making curricular and instructional choices</li> <li><b>3.10</b> Provides comprehensive information and media services that support the curricular and instructional programs</li> <li><b>4.1</b> Establishes performance measures for student learning that yield information that is reliable, valid, and bias free</li> <li><b>4.2</b> Develops and implements a comprehensive system for assessing progress toward meeting the expectations for student learning</li> <li><b>4.5</b> Communicates the results of student performance and school effectiveness to all stakeholders</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policies and Procedures that Foster and Sustain Improvement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1.6</b> Reviews its vision and purpose systematically and revises them when appropriate</li> <li><b>2.1</b> Establishes policies and procedures that provide for the effective operation of the school</li> <li><b>3.7</b> Provides for articulation and alignment between and among all levels of schools</li> <li><b>4.5</b> Communicates the results of student performance and school effectiveness to all stakeholders</li> <li><b>4.8</b> Maintains a secure, accurate, and complete student record system in accordance with state and federal regulations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Resources and Support Systems to Sustain Improvement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>2.8</b> Controls curricular and extra-curricular activities that are sponsored by the school</li> <li><b>5.2</b> Assigns professional staff responsibilities based on their qualifications, i.e. professional preparation, ability, knowledge, and experience</li> <li><b>5.4</b> Provides and assigns staff that are sufficient in number to meet the vision and purpose of the school</li> <li><b>5.5</b> Budgets sufficient resources to support its educational programs and to implement its plans for improvement</li> </ul>

## GLOSSARY

**Appreciation of diversity.** Develops awareness, understanding and respect for differences, beliefs, and traditions of ethnic and cultural groups

**Best practices.** Actions, processes, or interventions that are based in research or supported by results and are most likely to achieve the desired goal or performance level

**Comprehensive assessment system.** A system and processes for gathering, managing, analyzing, and disseminating data from multiple measures needed by the school and staff to make informed decisions, monitor performance and effectiveness, determine gaps in performance, identify needs (including professional development), and report results [see 4.2]

**Comprehensive materials collection.** The school secures, provides, and manages the materials and services needed to support and supplement learning. A comprehensive materials collection may include, but is not limited to: print and electronic media materials; visual aids; technology equipment; online materials access; classroom books and resources; and teaching aids [see 3.10]

**Continuously maintains.** Regularly and purposefully updates and disseminates information and data

**Diversity.** Ethnic, socioeconomic, gender, group, and/or cultural variety

**Equity.** The quality of being just, impartial, and fair; in the educational setting, equity includes insuring that all students have a fair and equal opportunity to access and benefit from all educational opportunities

**Formal channels.** Channels of communication that adhere to accepted and established policies, processes, and procedures [see 6.2]

**Impact statement.** Description of what one would be able to see or observe in a school if the requisite standard is fully implemented and it describes the effect on the school resulting from full implementation of a standard

**Indicator.** See Quality school indicator

**Intervention.** Intentional actions that are identified to meet improvement goals

**Learning community.** Colleagues who come together regularly to learn, make decisions, and solve problems in a meaningful and professional manner

**Performance indicators.** An index or composite of measures used to gauge the levels of performance or effectiveness of a part of the school for the purpose of monitoring results

**Profile.** Description of a school's current reality; students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school and community contexts for learning

**Purpose.** The reasons a school exists as defined by its mission, beliefs, values, philosophy, and/or goals

**Quality school indicator.** The operational definition of the practices, processes, or products required of a school as they relate to meeting accreditation standards

**Research based.** Programs, process, interventions, or practices that are supported by research resulting from scientific or quasi-scientific designs, using valid and reliable measures, and resulting in verifiable and repeatable positive results.

**School effectiveness.** The research-based practices that impact student performance and the organizational conditions of improving schools

**Stakeholders.** Staff, students, parents, community members, and others who have a vested interest in the school or district

**Standards.** The seven established qualitative conditions for excellence required of all accredited schools

**Student performance.** Knowledge, skills, or attitudes demonstrated by a student

**Systematic.** Processes that are repeatable and predictable rather than anecdotal and episodic

**Systemic.** Interdependent functions within a school that work together to improve results

**Validity.** The extent to which a measure is capable of producing information that is meaningful

**Vision.** An expression of the ideal or desired state of student learning and/or organizational operations based on expectations that are possible to achieve



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