

**Report of the
Quality Assurance Review Team
for
Zama High School
Unit 45005
Zama American High School
APO, AP (U.S. Military), United States 96343-5005**

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

Quality Assurance Review Report

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About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

Background. Founded in 1895, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) accredit public and private schools and districts in 30 states, the Navajo Nation, Latin America, and the Department of Defense Schools worldwide.

In April 2006, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) came together to form one strong unified organization dedicated to education quality. That unified organization, known as AdvancED, creates the world's largest education community, representing 27,000 public and private schools and districts across the United States and in 65 countries worldwide and educating 15 million students.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED. Through AdvancED, NCA CASI and SACS CASI have defined shared, research-based accreditation standards that cross state, regional, and national boundaries. Accompanying these standards is a unified accreditation process designed to help schools continuously improve.

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

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

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

Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

Purpose. The purpose of the Quality Assurance Review is to:

1. Evaluate the school's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards and policies.
2. Assess the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance.
3. Identify commendations and required actions to improve the school.
4. Make an accreditation recommendation for review by the national AdvancED Accreditation Commission.

A key aim of the Quality Assurance Review is to verify that the school is operating with institutional integrity - that it is fulfilling its vision and mission for its students.

School Preparation. To prepare for the Quality Assurance Review, the school community engages in an in-depth self assessment of each of the seven AdvancED standards. The school identifies and describes the evidence that demonstrates that it is meeting each standard. Through this internal review, the school examines how its systems and processes contribute to student performance and school effectiveness.

Summary of Team Activities. The Quality Assurance Review Team is led by an AdvancED certified team chair and comprised of professionals from outside the school. The team reviews the findings of the school's internal self-assessment, conducts interviews with representative groups of stakeholders, reviews student performance data and other documentation provided by the school, and observes practices and daily operations. The team engages in professional deliberations to reach consensus on the school's adherence to the standards for accreditation. The team provides an oral exit report and prepares a written Quality Assurance Review Team Report designed to help the school improve.

The Quality Assurance Review Team Report. Following the visit, the review team completes the Quality Assurance Review report. After review by a nationally-trained reader, the report is submitted to the school. The report contains commendations and required actions for improvement.

Using the Report - Responding to the Required Actions. The school uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The school is held accountable for addressing the required actions identified in the report. The NCA CASI/SACS CASI State Office is available to assist schools in addressing the required actions. At prescribed intervals, the school must submit a progress report detailing the actions and progress the school has made on the team's required actions. The report is reviewed at the state and national level to ensure the school is addressing the required actions.

Accreditation Recommendation. The Quality Assurance Review Team uses the findings from the onsite visit to make an accreditation recommendation that is reviewed by the 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 NCA CASI Department of Defense (NCA-CASI-DODEA), a division of AdvancED, visited the Zama High School in APO, AP (U.S. Military), United States on 02/13/2012 - 02/16/2012.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 3 members of the administrative team, 30 students, 49 parents, and 22 teachers. In addition, 8 support staff members and Military Base Command were interviewed. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the school. Specifically, the team examined the school's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

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

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

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

Commendations

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

Commendation 1

Commendation Statement:

A small, but dedicated, cadre of teachers focuses on student learning over and above delivery of curriculum, creating “pockets of excellence” in co- and extra-curricular activities as well as academics.

Evidence:

The teaching and learning process in some classrooms provides opportunities for all students to learn, demonstrates an appreciation for diversity, and reflects a commitment to equity. Teacher involvement and commitment to hold students under their supervision accountable for engaged learning and to work with parents

to improve student understanding and retesting to raise grades was evident in some cases. During interviews some parents and staff members commended the efforts of some teachers to improve the school climate and help students meet their expectations for learning. Some students and parents noted that there are teachers who are willing to go the “extra mile” for students struggling with academic subjects. Parents and teachers also mentioned that the small enrollment provides opportunities for personalized student learning.

Rationale:

Students thrive when teachers are committed to doing whatever it takes to help students learn.

Commendation 2

Commendation Statement:

The school enjoys a high level of commitment and support from parents, military command, and other external stakeholders.

Evidence:

Parents support and have high expectations for their student’s achievement and that they support the school and teachers so that everyone can work together to help students learn. The School Liaison Officer for Naval Air Facility Atsugi has implemented a broad variety of strategies for effecting communication about the school with stakeholders. The youth center on Camp Zama provides many opportunities for students to participate in outside-of-school activities. External stakeholders shared in interviews that they are supportive of continuous school improvement and would welcome opportunities to participate actively on committees should they be asked.

Rationale:

When parents, military command, and teachers work together to support student learning, students achieve at higher levels.

Commendation 3

Commendation Statement:

Staff and community members see the assignment of the interim principal as a positive and hopeful change for the school.

Evidence:

Students, teachers, and external stakeholders mentioned that the interim principal is making concerted efforts to get to know people and build relationships that support collegial interactions among adults as well as between adults and students. Most teachers and external stakeholders shared in interviews that they are supportive of his efforts to provide a positive learning climate. NOTE: At the time of the QAR visit, the interim principal had been “on board” only a couple of weeks.

Rationale:

When a principal interacts positively with students, teachers, and parents, the learning environment is likely to be more encouraging and affirming for all learners, adults as well as students.

Commendation 4

Commendation Statement:

Most students and teachers share a common understanding of word walls and writing rubrics, adapting these strategies to specific subject areas and student needs.

Evidence:

Teachers can articulate the purpose of the word wall and writing rubric and use these two strategies in their classrooms. Students shared clear understanding of the word walls and writing rubrics, offering examples of how these are used in the classes. Teachers have developed a general writing rubric and modified this rubric to meet the needs of students in their subject area. The general writing rubric is used in many variations, in special education as well as regular education venues.

Rationale:

Teachers who share common understanding of continuous improvement strategies have more success using them for classroom instruction.

Required Actions

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

Required Action 1

Required Action:

Review and revise the current action plan OR develop and implement a new action plan that includes not only the outline for implementing strategies, but also processes for monitoring effective implementation and verifiable improvement of student achievement.

Evidence:

As a way to give life to the vision and mission, the school adopted two student performance goals: 1) to improve reading and 2) to improve writing. An action plan has been created for each goal that includes strategies and professional development plans. However, these action plans are incomplete, and the QAR team heard little about how these plans are monitored to determine successful implementation and positive impact on student achievement. School improvement leaders and teachers are handicapped by incomplete action plans. Parents and other stakeholders confirmed in interviews that while the school does communicate the vision and goals in many ways, they as parents and stakeholders outside the school are frustrated that they have few opportunities to participate in discussions about the vision, goals, and continuous improvement efforts. This frustration was echoed by school representatives who noted that because open and constructive communication and collaboration among teachers is often compromised by the fractious and confrontational behaviors of a few negative teachers, discussions about student achievement and continuous school improvement are limited.

Rationale:

A school where all stakeholders are committed to and working toward a well-developed action plan is a school where student achievement reaches or exceeds expectations.

Required Action 2

Required Action:

Implement strategies to aggressively address and resolve the current obstructive and negative climate perpetuated by an intimidating, manipulative minority of staff members, which is compromising the school's vision of a "positive and supportive learning environment."

Evidence:

Parents and many school representatives who participated in interviews noted that open and constructive communication and collaboration between and among teachers and other stakeholders is often compromised by the fractious and confrontational behaviors of a few negative teachers. Related consequences include reluctance of teachers to accept leadership opportunities and limited opportunities for parents to participate in meaningful ways in the continuous improvement processes. While it was not the purpose nor intent of the QAR team to evaluate the performance and behavior of individual teachers, evidence quickly surfaced that confrontational and manipulative behaviors of a few are impacting leadership and governance -- this situation the QAR team could not dismiss or ignore. Interviews with faculty and staff, parent and community members, as well as observations made by the QAR team, revealed there exists within the school an environment that is negatively interfering with the school-wide recognition and preservation of the executive, administrative, and leadership prerogatives of not only the principal, but also those faculty members desiring to engage in efforts to improve the school. Stakeholders frequently shared the following perception with the QAR team: the priorities and building level politics of some negative staff members are more focused on the "wants of teachers" rather than on the "needs of students." Several parents, teachers, and other staff members referred to the current environment as "toxic" to communication, innovation, and improvement of the school. Despite the desire of various stakeholders to more actively engage in activities and responsibilities beyond their current situation, the QAR team saw and heard evidence that the current environment inhibits their willingness to participate in processes and activities consistent with a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership.

Rationale:

A school where all stakeholders accept responsibility and work together to establish and sustain a positive, collaborative working environment is also more likely to establish and sustain a positive learning environment where students can thrive.

Required Action 3

Required Action:

Review, revise, and implement instructional practices to facilitate greater student engagement in classroom activities and seminar time with a focus on improved achievement.

Evidence:

The QAR team observed evidence of some teachers' commitment to sound instructional strategies. In some classrooms the team observed examples of truly innovative activities to engage students in their learning. On the other hand, the team observed students in many classrooms passively working on worksheets and reading textbooks, with little productive engagement between students and teachers. Comments from parents and staff members extolled the quality of students at the school and the efforts of some faculty members to improve the school climate and help students meet their expectations for learning. However, there was a repeating theme from parents and some staff members that student learning was often tied directly to which teacher students were assigned and how much other teachers were willing to go the "extra mile" for students struggling with academic subjects. Many parents expressed concerns about their children missing tutoring and other student support

opportunities during the seminar time scheduled for just this purpose because students are not always allowed by subject area teachers to seek such tutoring or support during seminar time.

Rationale:

Teachers who provide instruction based on identified student needs help all students achieve at high levels.

Required Action 4

Required Action:

Develop and implement a comprehensive assessment system based on valid and reliable assessment data, focused on improved student achievement, and dedicated to improving instruction.

Evidence:

While data are presented in the profile and data statements are provided, the QAR team noted that little interpretation of data beyond the data statements was provided. It is unclear to the QAR team how the school goes beyond the presentation of data to actually interpret the meaning from the data – and then use that interpretive information to make program and instructional decisions. The school stated in the Self Assessment (SA) that teacher-based assessment of student performance is “conducted in each course and at its completion.” However, the QAR team did not hear or see evidence that these assessments actually occur or are sufficient to facilitate meaningful judgments about the effectiveness of instruction. The QAR team was understandably concerned when some staff members stated TerraNova scores were good, when on review scores have not recently shown much improvement. In fact, some staff members shared comments such as “Students are scoring well – and that’s OK”; other teachers seemed unconcerned when the QAR team mentioned that “the scores were flat.” Teachers mentioned that they talk about students’ specific needs and how students are performing; however, the QAR team found limited evidence that the school uses formal processes for reviewing individual student achievement data and discussing ways in which student needs are being met.

Rationale:

Teachers who implement a comprehensive assessment system with fidelity can verify that students are learning and confirm that continuous improvement efforts are effective.

Required Action 5

Required Action:

Institute and implement policies and systemic procedures to revitalize and engage parents and other external stakeholders in the continuous improvement process

Evidence:

Parents and other external stakeholders (i.e., command representatives) noted that they are supportive of continuous school improvement and would welcome opportunities to participate actively on committees should they be asked. One parent noted, and others echoed the sentiment, that continuous improvement is “not about the faculty alone – it’s about students, teachers, parents, the military community all working together.” Another parent noted that “the seeds [of improvement] are beginning to grow” among teachers and parents and yet “there is still much work to be done.” Because parents must come from different living areas to participate in school activities, the school makes an effort to conduct a variety of athletic and after-school activities at both Camp Zama and NAF Atsugi. On the other hand, parents shared with the QAR team that the distance between housing areas and the resulting time required for travel often interfere with parent participation at the level that most parents would prefer. Further, parents and other stakeholders confirmed in interviews that while the school

communicates the vision and goals in many ways, they as parents and stakeholders outside the school are frustrated that they have few opportunities to participate in discussions about the vision, goals, and continuous improvement efforts. Despite the desire of various stakeholders to more actively engage in activities and responsibilities, the QAR team saw and heard evidence that the current negative environment inhibits their willingness to participate in these processes and activities. In fact, several parents, teachers, and other staff members referred to the current environment as “toxic” to communication, innovation, and improvement of the school.

Rationale:

When parents and other external stakeholders are actively involved in the continuous improvement process, individual expertise can be leveraged and leadership of continuous improvement activities can be shared, resulting in more effective continuous improvement efforts.

Required Action 6

Required Action:

Develop, implement with fidelity, and document implementation and impact of a multi-year continuous improvement plan that specifies actions, responsibilities, and resources along with strategies to support positive relationships and collaboration among staff members in addressing the school’s improvement goals and interventions.

Evidence:

During the school improvement briefing, school leaders shared with the QAR team various opportunities that school staff members were offered to help prepare for the QAR visit. Even though opportunities for collaboration were provided, the Self Assessment and Executive Summary were developed by only a few people. As additional confirmation of the minimal level of commitment to continuous improvement, no evidence was available to describe ways the school responded to the 2007 QAR report after the mandatory school-submitted Annual Progress Report (APR) following the 2007 QAR. Furthermore, school leaders and some teachers reported that efforts to implement continuous improvement plans ranged from dormant to non-existent until the 2010 – 2011 school year when it became a “high priority” to prepare for the 2012 QAR visit. Frustration with limited commitment to continuous improvement was shared by school representatives who noted that because open and constructive communication and collaboration among teachers is often compromised by the fractious and confrontational behaviors of a few negative teachers, discussions about student achievement and engagement in continuous school improvement are limited. Several parents, teachers, and other staff members referred to the current environment as “toxic” to communication, innovation, and improvement of the school. Despite the desire of various stakeholders to more actively engage with teachers to make the school the best it can be, the QAR team saw and heard evidence that the current environment inhibits stakeholders’ willingness to participate in processes and activities consistent with a culture of participation, responsibility, and shared ownership for helping students achieve at high levels.

Rationale:

When all stakeholders are committed to working together, continuous improvement will likely be more successful.

Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools: The team reviewed the school's adherence to each of the AdvancED standards. The findings from this review are provided in the next section of this report.

Next Steps

The school should:

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

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

Summary

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

Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

The primary requirement for accreditation is that the Zama High 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:

Like all DoDEA schools, Zama American High School uses the DoDEA vision and mission as the school's vision and mission. The vision is: "A community working together to help students achieve high educational standards through a positive and supportive learning environment that enables all students to be successful." The mission is: "To provide an exemplary education that inspires and prepares all DoDEA students for success in a dynamic global environment."

To give life to the vision and mission, the school adopted two student performance goals: 1) to improve reading and 2) to improve writing. An action plan has been created for each goal that includes strategies and professional development plans. While monitoring plans are included, data presentations with related analysis and interpretation are neither complete nor up-to-date. Further, no commentary is included in the action plan to describe ways in which the school improvement plan should be reviewed and modified, whether strategies should continue, be modified, or be discontinued. Consequently, school improvement leaders and teachers are handicapped by incomplete action plans.

Comments from many teachers confirm that teachers understand the purpose of the word wall and writing rubric and use these two strategies in their classrooms. Students shared clear understanding of the word walls and writing rubrics, offering examples of how they used these in their classes. Typical student comments included: "[The rubric] is a form that helps us learn how to write – how to use correct grammar and punctuation, and how to tell formal from informal writing" and "[The rubric] is simple and easy to use – it is a good editing tool." Some teachers noted that the rubric provides a good tool for peer editing. The QAR team believes it is also important to note that many stakeholders noted that word walls and the writing rubric have only been in use a short time. It did not appear to the QAR Team that these strategies have been institutionalized into instruction across the curriculum, nor consistently applied with the same priority by all faculty.

The school noted in the Executive Summary (ES) that "The staff of ZAHS has developed school goals that help guide our school improvement process as well as aid teachers in their efforts to differentiate instruction and best meet students' academic needs. Strategies such as a writing rubric and looking at student work help provide immediate feedback in the classroom as we work towards our goals." As noted above, teachers shared ways in which they adapt the common rubric to specific subject areas; however, it was unclear to the QAR team how teachers use the data from rubric assessments to modify curriculum as needed to meet the required standards or to differentiate instruction to meet individual student needs.

Additionally, the QAR team heard no teacher talk about ways in which they use the Looking at Student Work (LSW) processes to discuss the effectiveness of the writing rubric as a learning and assessment tool, nor did the QAR team see any artifacts to support implementation of LSW.

As noted in the Self Assessment (SA), the school communicates the vision in a variety of ways; examples include school newsletters, parent training / informational activities, Parent Teacher Organization meetings, school and community displays, information provided by the School Liaison Officers (SLO) for Camp Zama and Naval Air Facility (NAF) Atsugi. Parents and other stakeholders confirmed in interviews that while the school does communicate the vision and goals in many ways, they as parents and stakeholders outside the school are frustrated that they have few opportunities to participate in discussions about the vision, goals, and continuous improvement efforts. This frustration was echoed by school representatives who noted that because open and constructive communication and collaboration among teachers is often compromised by the fractious and confrontational behaviors of a few negative teachers, discussions about student achievement and continuous school improvement are limited.

The most current published profile was updated in November 2011 and includes longitudinal data for TerraNova, Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), ACT, and Advanced Placement (AP) as well as other survey data. However, this profile includes little demographic and student achievement data beyond the 2009 – 2010 school year: only SAT scores, D and F lists, and honor roll data are included for the 2010 – 2011 school year. Furthermore, the analysis of data in the profile includes only data statements, with almost no interpretive comments that might be useful to guide continuous improvement planning, implementation, review, and revision.

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

- The vision and mission are displayed around the school and in most classrooms.
- Some teachers can articulate the purpose of the word wall and writing rubric and use these two strategies in their classrooms.
- Students shared clear understanding of the word walls and writing rubrics, offering examples of how these are used in the classes.

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

- Design and implement a process for involving all stakeholders in the review and revision of the school mission, vision, goals, and strategies.
- Review and revise the current profile to include current assessment data along with substantive comments about what the data mean and how this meaning might be transformed into positive action at the school, classroom, and student levels.

Finding: Zama High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Emerging" and has not 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:

Prior to the school visit, the QAR team co-chairs met with district leaders, military command at both Camp Zama and NAF Atsugi, and the building administrator. During these meetings, the chairs received information detailing various perceptions, history, and concerns related to the status of leadership and governance issues.

The school has experienced multiple principal changes over the past few years, with the current interim principal having been assigned to the school less than two weeks prior to the QAR visit. It has been communicated to the staff and community that the interim principal is assigned to the school only until the end of the 2011 – 2012 school year and then will return to his former school. All stakeholders who met with the QAR team noted that, despite his short tenure at the school, the experience, personality, and leadership style of the interim principal has been positively received.

While it was not the purpose nor intent of the QAR team to evaluate the performance and behavior of individual teachers, evidence impacting leadership and governance at the school quickly surfaced which could not be dismissed nor ignored. Interviews with faculty and staff, parent and community members, as well as observations made by the QAR team, revealed there exists within the school an environment that is negatively interfering with the school-wide recognition and preservation of the executive, administrative, and leadership prerogatives of not only the principal, but also those faculty members desiring to engage in efforts to improve the school. Further, this situation is negatively influencing parental perception of the school and parents' willingness to interact with a minority, but controlling, group of negative faculty members. Stakeholders frequently shared the following perception with the QAR team: the priorities and building level politics of some negative staff members are more focused on the "wants of teachers" rather than on the "needs of students." Several parents, teachers, and other staff members referred to the current environment as "toxic" to communication, innovation, and improvement of the school. Despite the desire of various stakeholders to more actively engage in activities and responsibilities beyond their current situation, the QAR team saw and heard evidence that the current environment inhibits their willingness to participate in processes and activities consistent with a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership. Several faculty members shared with the QAR team that a small group of negative and influential teachers inhibiting the progress of the school feels empowered by what they perceive as their influence over the recent series of principal changes.

The principal, district leaders, and the DoDEA members of the QAR team confirmed evidence of systemic policies and procedures that ensure the effective operation of the school and compliance with established laws and regulations.

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

- Staff and community members see the assignment of the interim principal as a positive and hopeful change for the school.
- There exists within the staff and community a nucleus of individuals ready and willing to participate in improving the climate of the school.

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

- Design and implement immediate proactive strategies to engage district, command, and building leadership in aggressively addressing the current negative climate in the school and to increase the focus of the school toward meeting the needs of students over the wishes of some negative staff members.

Finding: Zama High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Emerging" and has not 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:

The school follows the DoDEA prescribed curriculum with clearly-defined expectations for student learning. The teaching and learning process provides opportunities for all students to learn, demonstrates an appreciation for diversity, and reflects a commitment to equity.

Curriculum standards are posted in most classrooms and some teachers discussed instructional strategies they use to address the standards. Curriculum support materials include workbooks, assessments, online textbooks in some subjects, and technology to support curricular delivery. Tutor.com is available to all students for extra help when needed. While teachers use most available resources, teachers noted that some technology requires technical assistance and training to implement. The team found evidence of a well-equipped instructional technology program focused on supporting curricular and instructional needs of students and teachers. Teachers also noted that the educational technologist has made huge strides in assisting teachers in using this technology to support the teaching and learning process.

The QAR team observed evidence of some teachers' commitment to sound instructional strategies. In some classrooms the team observed examples of truly innovative activities to engage students in their learning. On the other hand, the team observed students in many classrooms either disengaged in the learning process or passively working on worksheets and reading textbooks, with little productive engagement between students and teachers.

Teachers articulated to the QAR team an awareness of the improvement strategies. While the QAR team observed posting of subject-specific word walls and writing rubrics in classrooms, these observations did not yield consistent implementation across the majority of classrooms. Further, the QAR team saw limited evidence of local assessments to provide data connecting improved student achievement to these strategies. The team also did not see any evidence of data or research being used to drive differentiation of curriculum or instruction.

Comments from parents and staff extolled the quality of students at the school and the efforts of some faculty to improve the school climate and help students meet their expectations for learning. However,

there was a repeating theme from parents and some staff members that student learning was tied directly to which teacher they were assigned and how much other teachers were willing to go the “extra mile” for students struggling with academic subjects.

Teacher involvement and commitment to hold students under their supervision accountable for engaged learning and to work with parents to improve student understanding and retesting to raise grades was evident in some cases. On the other hand, some teachers noted that a high percentage of students appear on the D/F lists for some courses; based on review of profile data, the QAR team shares this concern and notes that not all teachers show the same level of concern. In interviews with students and parents, the QAR team heard comments that reflect a “care-less” attitude on the part of some teachers to help failing students. Even though the counselor has only recently been appointed to the school, she has made determined efforts to empower and challenge teachers by personally monitoring the D/F lists on a weekly basis, talking with students as well as teachers.

Because of weekly eligibility requirements, coaches are frequently the last line of emphasis for students to raise their grades as a condition of participation in athletic events. Some parents and staff members noted that coaches as well as the JROTC staff take student achievement very seriously and are extremely effective in motivating their students by holding them individually accountable.

Student peer coaching and tutoring were evident in some cases and there appeared to be a positive force generated by some very committed teachers to challenge students to excel beyond meeting minimum expectations. While the school has implemented an A/B block schedule with seminar time on alternate days, the QAR team and many parents have concerns about missed tutoring and other student support opportunities because students are not always allowed to seek such tutoring or support during seminar time.

While the Self Assessment states the use of horizontal and vertical teaming to look at curriculum and student work, evidence of this collaborative effort on a structured and consistent basis was not found by the QAR team.

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

- A small, but dedicated, cadre of teachers and support staff members focuses on the identified needs of students and promotes student learning over simple delivery of the curriculum.
- The small size of the school provides excellent opportunities for student growth and interaction.
- Parents support and have high expectations for their children’s achievement.

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

- Develop and implement strategies to better utilize performance data to drive improved instruction.
- Review and revise current instructional delivery to facilitate greater student engagement in classroom activities and seminar time with a focus on improved achievement.
- Reorganize available time to put in practice, document, and report on the implementation of vertical and horizontal collaboration.

Finding: Zama High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Emerging" and has not 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 is presently operating under a mission statement that expresses a desire “to help students achieve high educational standards.” Furthermore, high educational standards are evident in the continuous school improvement goals. Goal #1 focuses on reading skills and is expressed with the objective to “improve critical reading skills in each subject area,” with a focus on “content-specific vocabulary.” Goal #2 focuses on writing skills and is expressed with the objective to “improve critical writing skills in each subject area,” with a focus on helping students learn to write clearly and effectively.

The school stated in the Self Assessment (SA) that teacher-based assessment of student performance is “conducted in each course and at its completion.” The SA also suggests that information from these assessments will be compared to determine if intended learning outcomes were met. However, the QAR team did not hear or see evidence suggesting these assessments actually occur or are sufficient to facilitate meaningful judgments about the effectiveness of instruction.

Students participate in several assessment processes including the SAT, PSAT, ACT, TerraNova, and AP exams, as well as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) when required. Staff members stated TerraNova scores were good, but had not shown recent improvement or mentioned that “the scores were flat.” In fact, some staff members shared comments such as “Students are scoring well – and that’s OK.” One teacher mentioned the need for an assessment that allows comparison of individual student achievement to learning expectations rather than only comparing composite school-level TerraNova data with data from other schools.

The QAR team observed word walls in most classrooms and teachers of all subjects shared that they use word walls in different ways to meet specific subject needs. During the initial briefing, the CSI team members told the QAR team that recent review of TerraNova data indicated students were struggling with mathematics word problems. In response, the school chose to implement specific word wall strategies to help students develop broader technical mathematical vocabulary.

The CSI team acknowledged the need to refine strategies to better meet student needs. Additionally, the CSI team mentioned a weakness in the area of critical thinking skills. Teachers mentioned that they talk about students’ specific needs and how students are performing; however, the QAR team found little evidence that the school uses formal processes for reviewing individual student achievement data and discussing ways in which student needs are being met.

The school conducts limited analysis and interpretation of standardized scores including data from Terra Nova, SAT, ACT and AP exams. These scores are compared to other DoDEA schools as well as national and international standards. Data provided by the school show a significantly lower score on AP exams when compared to other DoDEA schools and internationally. In the 2010 – 2011 school year, AP scores for students were lower than scores from other DoDEA schools on all report views. The largest difference is shown on the AP Biology exam, scores from which were 20 percentage points lower than other DoDEA schools and 40 percentage points lower than all schools in 2011. While those data are available, it is

unclear to the team how the school goes beyond the presentation of the data to actually interpret the meaning from the data – and then use that interpretive information to make program and instructional decisions.

Analysis of the SAT data report stated: “For the current SY2010-2011, 51 students have taken the exam to date. Out of 51, 100% of the students scored below the national standard. This is a decrease from the previous two school years.” The school’s PSAT data have shown to be consistent with the national and DoDEA Japan scores. The data show the school being somewhat higher in some categories during some years, but there is no indication of a significant variance in scores from year to year. As stated in the data report, “10th grade students at ZAHS scored at or above National PSAT standards in each of the three years, while 11th grade scores fell just under the National average in each of the same three years.” While the data are presented in the profile and data statements are provided, the QAR team noted that the analysis and interpretation process stops at that point. Little interpretation of data beyond the data statements was provided.

The school has participated in the TerraNova standardized assessments. As stated in the data provided for the QAR team: “The DoDEA Community Strategic Plan includes an outcome that 75% of students score in the Top Two National Quarters for each subject area tested. In 2010, the 9th grade group did not meet this outcome in any of the areas, while the 10th grade was below the standard in only Math and Science. The 11th graders met the standard in all areas except Math and Social Studies in 2010.” The school did not provide data from the 2011 TerraNova testing cycle.

For the 2008 – 2009 school year, ACT data indicated students out-performed the national average by a significant amount. The data from 2009-2010 indicated the school’s student performance equal to or greater than the national average except in College Biology. Students were approximately 2 points below the national average in this sub-group. The counselor confirmed that students took the ACT in 2010 – 2011; however, these data were not included in the profile.

The school has not conducted a local assessment to determine the need to continue the present goals or to switch the focus to another area of improvement. A comprehensive assessment system for assessing progress toward meeting the expectations for student learning is currently lacking. Teacher interviews revealed last year some local assessments were attempted but with limited participation. No local formative assessments have been conducted during the current school year.

The only local assessment the school uses is the general writing rubric. The CSI committee explained that teachers and students use this rubric as both a writing development tool and an assessment and many teachers shared that they adjust the rubric based on unique student needs. During numerous interviews, some teachers noted the positive benefits of the writing rubric on student performance, even with the short time of implementation. Interviews confirmed benefits to student achievement in both special education and regular education venues. Students noted in interviews that they like the writing rubric because it is easy to use and helps them assess their own writing. The QAR team observed teachers in some classrooms conducting informal assessments by walking around and evaluating students’ work or progress informally.

The school maintains student records as required by DoDEA policy. The school provides parent and/or sponsors with copies of their child’s results on the above- mentioned standardized tests.

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

- Teachers have developed a general writing rubric and modified this rubric to meet the needs of students in their subject areas and is used in special education as well as regular education venues.

- Teachers in some classrooms conduct informal assessments by walking around and evaluating students' work or progress informally.

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

- Develop and implement a comprehensive local assessment program to collect, organize, analyze, and interpret data to determine if current goals should be continued, modified, or replaced.
- Create a method of collaborative data analysis that teachers can use to make adjustments to instruction that will result in higher student achievement.
- Share all data analysis with all stakeholders in an open and transparent manner and encourage discussion about the data.

Finding: Zama High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Not Evident" and has not 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:

A review of artifacts and conversations with administrators confirm the school adheres to the DoDEA policies and procedures regarding recruitment and employment of faculty and staff. In light of the school's small enrollment, a concerted effort is made to assign teachers based on their professional preparation and knowledge. Staffing is sufficient to meet the stated vision and purpose of the school. A student support team of specialists is in place to collaborate with teachers to meet the needs of struggling students. A guidance counselor is available to support students and manage scheduling. A school psychologist has been assigned to the school and will be on site in the near future. Additional resources and support systems include access to a school nurse and special education paraprofessionals.

While informal connections are made, the QAR team did not see evidence of a structured, consistent process to mentor and support new faculty members. Employee performance is reviewed and monitored consistent with established DoDEA protocols. In support of professional growth, specific days are scheduled and implemented throughout the year; however, the team was unable to find any evidence of the development or implementation of a long-range professional development plan aligned with the school's improvement goals and strategies.

Classrooms are located in four buildings – and the high school shares additional facilities on the same campus with the middle school (i.e., gymnasium, track and football field, auditorium, cafeteria). School facilities are clean, well-maintained, and conducive to a positive and safe learning environment. The school and individual classrooms are well-equipped with technology to support instruction. During the QAR team in-brief the school shared that the school is “technology-rich” and benefits from a low student-to-teacher ratio. Activity busses are available to support transportation needs of students participating in after-school activities.

The Department of Defense allocates funding to DoDEA, which in turn apportions funds to the school based upon enrollment and local needs. Financial resources are managed by the school with oversight and auditing by DoDEA. It appeared to the QAR team that adequate resources are provided to the school to meet its mission.

Student safety is a priority. A crisis and security plan has been developed and is in place. Monthly fire drills are coordinated and scheduled by the command. Additional drills and evacuations are also scheduled and implemented by the school. Information shared by command, parents, and staff members reflect the school did an exemplary job of responding to the challenges, issues, and voluntary departures necessitated by the March 2011 Japanese earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear fallout concerns.

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

- The school benefits from ample resources and a student enrollment conducive to a positive learning environment.
- The campus and school facilities are safe, clean, and well-maintained.
- The school did an exemplary job of responding to the challenges, issues, and voluntary departures necessitated by the March 2011 Japanese earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear fallout concerns.

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

- Develop and implement a long-range professional development plan to support staff in addressing the school's future improvement goals and strategies.

Finding: Zama High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

Standard 6: Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

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

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

Zama High School is unique in that it provides educational services to children from different military communities including, Camp Zama (home of US Army Japan), NAF Atsugi (home to Carrier Air Wing 5), Sagamihara Housing Area, and the Sagamihara Housing Depot Area. Because parents must come from different living areas to participate in school activities, the school makes an effort to conduct a variety of athletic and after-school activities at both Camp Zama and NAF Atsugi. On the other hand, parents shared with the QAR team that the distance between housing areas and the resulting time required for travel often interfere with parent participation at the level that most parents would prefer.

School Liaison Officer (SLO) positions have been assigned by both commands to serve as links between the school community and the command. The SLO from NAF Atsugi shared with the team a variety of communication tools (i.e., newsletters, community board postings, Facebook page) focused on keeping parents and community members informed about school activities and events. On the other hand, the team chairs heard from both the Camp Zama command and the school of the need to strengthen the engagement and communication efforts of the current SLO position.

Members of each stakeholder group communicated to the QAR team the belief that the school offers a safe environment for students and that students can succeed. Conversations with all stakeholder groups reflected commitment and support for the school's purpose and mission. All groups expressed positive early impressions of the personality and leadership style of the interim principal.

On the other hand, some faculty and staff members, as well as numerous parents, shared significant and vocal frustration with an oppressive and controlling atmosphere sustained by a small number of negatively influential faculty members who are more focused on individual teacher wants and needs than on the needs and best interests of students and the school. The QAR team heard evidence of obstructive behaviors used to inhibit and discourage collaborative efforts consistent with the school's vision of creating a "positive and supportive learning environment."

While parents are aware of how their students are performing, some expressed concern about inconsistent application and management of the athletic eligibility requirements. Further, they expressed a desire that teachers provide assignments to student-athletes prior to departure for athletic events, rather after their return. Some parents shared their concerns that current procedures (i.e., not providing assignments prior to departure) penalize students by jeopardizing their grades for missed work.

Students shared with the team a variety of observations about their teachers – that they like their school and that the small size of the school facilitates one-on-one interaction between some teachers and students. The school engages community members in such activities as the homecoming parade and school concerts. Further, the school has established a partner school relationship with the local Yamato-Nishi High School.

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

- The SLO for NAF Atsugi has implemented a broad variety of strategies for effecting communication about the school with stakeholders.
- Conducting athletic and other after-school events at both Camp Zama and NAF Atsugi reflects the school's respect for student and parental involvement at both sites.
- The small size of the school provides opportunities for positive student interactions.

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

- Review and modify current athletic eligibility procedures to insure implementation of an approach to consistently encourage and support improved student-athlete achievement.
- Work with the Camp Zama command to establish and maintain better support through the SLO position.

Finding: Zama High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Emerging" and has not 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:

At the time of the QAR visit, the school is giving life to the DoDEA vision and mission by focusing on two student performance goals: 1) to improve reading and 2) to improve writing. To assure that these goals focus on DoDEA expectations for student learning, some teachers use a word wall based on vocabulary specific to the subject area and a common writing rubric that outlines a basic writing process. An action plan has been created for each goal that includes interventions (strategies) and professional development plans; however, these action plans do not describe ways in which plans should be reviewed and modified, whether strategies should continue, be modified, or be discontinued. Consequently, school improvement leaders and teachers are handicapped by incomplete action plans.

Teachers noted in interviews that they received training in how to use the common rubric, with encouragement to adapt as needed to best fit the needs of specific subject and student needs. Teachers also shared that they helped each other learn to use rubrics and word walls in different ways in different subjects. Because teachers began using word walls and rubrics only recently, implementation is inconsistent across classrooms. Some teachers and students noted in interviews that word walls are helpful to make connections between new vocabulary and prior knowledge and that the writing rubric provides guidance for both the writing process and the assessment of writing. However, it is unclear to the QAR team how information from the rubric assessment is used to inform future instruction or to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.

School representatives noted and parents echoed that “there are pockets of excellence” at Zama American High School. Students also noted that some teachers care about them and are willing to provide extra help when students are struggling. On the other hand, students and parents noted that the effectiveness and efficacy of the learning environment are compromised due to a lack of mutual respect between and among some school staff members. Specifically, one parent noted that “this is a cultural problem that goes beyond ‘discouraged’.”

During the school improvement briefing, school leaders shared with the QAR team ways in which school staff members were offered opportunities to help prepare for the QAR visit. Teachers were assigned to standard committees based on their common planning times. These standard committees were charged with preparing comments for the Self Assessment. Even though these opportunities for collaboration were provided, the school improvement chair drafted both the Self Assessment and the Executive Summary with limited support from others.

While the school maintains a profile of demographic and student performance information, not all data are current. Furthermore, the analysis of data in the profile includes only data statements, with few interpretive comments that might be useful to guide continuous improvement planning, implementation, review, and revision.

As additional confirmation of the minimal level of commitment to continuous improvement, no evidence was available to describe ways the school responded to the 2007 QAR report after the mandatory school-

submitted Annual Progress Report (APR) following the 2007 QAR. Furthermore, school leaders and some teachers reported that efforts to implement continuous improvement plans ranged from dormant to non-existent until the 2010 – 2011 school year when it became a “high priority” to prepare for the 2012 QAR visit.

Stakeholders who participated in interviews noted that they are supportive of continuous school improvement and would welcome opportunities to participate actively on committees should they be asked. One parent noted, and others echoed the sentiment, that continuous improvement is “not about the faculty alone – it’s about students, teachers, parents, the military community all working together.” Another parent noted that “the seeds [of improvement] are beginning to grow” among teachers and parents and yet “there is still much work to be done.”

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

- To assure that continuous improvement goals focus on DoDEA expectations for student learning, some teachers use a word wall based on vocabulary specific to their subject area and a common writing rubric that outlines a basic writing process.
- Students, parents, and teachers acknowledge there are “pockets of excellence” at Zama American High School.
- External stakeholders noted that they are supportive of continuous school improvement and would welcome opportunities to participate actively on committees should they be asked.

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

- Resolve the current issue of obstructive behaviors by some staff to more consistently implement the “positive and supportive learning environment” reflected in the school’s vision.
- Refine and implement complete action plans that specifically describe ways in which strategies are to be implemented, evaluated for effectiveness, and adjusted as necessary with a focus on improving student achievement.
- Review the literature and research strategies implemented effectively by other schools to identify effective ways to engage external stakeholders in the continuous improvement process.

Finding: Zama High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Not Evident" and has not met this standard for accreditation.

Conclusion

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

The team identified required actions for improvement that the school will need to address. Following this review, the school will be required to submit a progress report summarizing its progress toward addressing the team's required actions.

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

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Ms. Mary L. Mickelson, Chair/Lead Evaluator (Indiana Wesleyan University)
- Dr. William R. Munsell Ph.D., Vice Chair (University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center)
- Mr. Joseph A. LeMire, Team Member (Robert D Edgren High School)
- Dr. George Sheldon, Team Member (Yokota Middle 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.