

How can I find out more about accreditation and begin the accreditation process for my school/district?

Visit www.advance-ed.org for a step-by-step guide to initial accreditation, or contact your NCA CASI or SACS CASI State Office. A listing of state offices also is available on the AdvanceED Web site.

How else can I get involved in the accreditation process?

You can assist with accreditation efforts by:

- Talking with your superintendent and school principals about accreditation.
- Volunteering to serve on school/district improvement committees.
- Helping inform the community of the importance of NCA/CASI/SACS CASI accreditation.
- Requesting and reviewing your NCA CASI/SACS CASI external review team reports for your schools.
- Celebrating and recognizing the schools in your district when they earn accreditation and make strides in continuous improvement efforts.



About AdvanceED

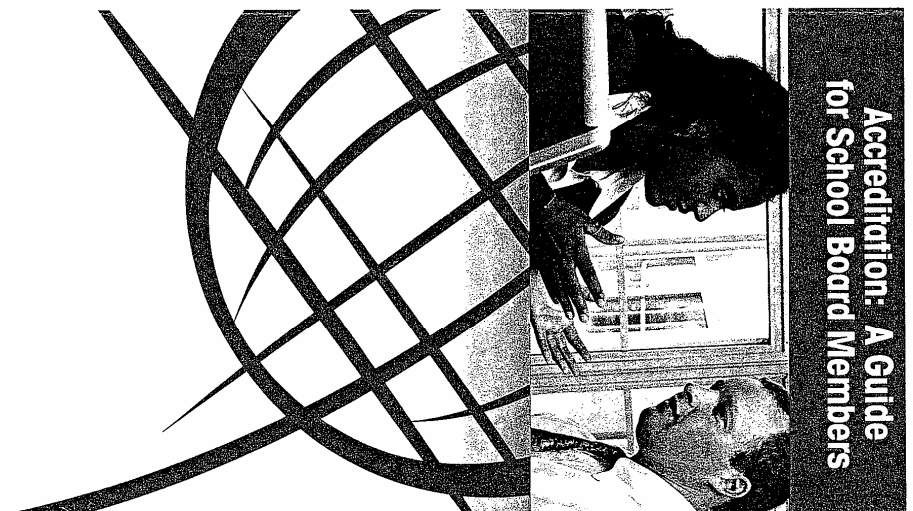
AdvanceED is the parent organization for the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE). NCA CASI and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvanceED and operate through state offices.

Dedicated to advancing excellence in education worldwide, AdvanceED provides accreditation, research, and professional services to 23,000 public and private schools and 4,500 school districts in 30 states and 65 countries. AdvanceED engages 18,000 volunteers and touches the lives of nearly 15 million students each year.

Visit www.advance-ed.org to learn more about accreditation and AdvanceED.



Accreditation divisions of AdvanceED



What is accreditation?

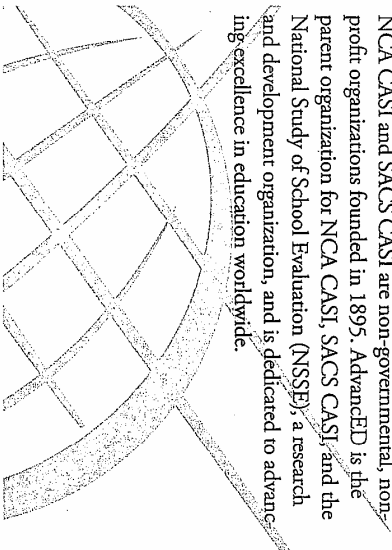
Accreditation is a voluntary method of quality assurance developed more than 100 years ago by American universities and secondary schools. Today, to demonstrate educational quality, accreditation is used by education providers of all types from traditional schools to distance learning providers to tutoring centers serving all ages of students from toddlers to adults.

Accreditation engages the school community in meeting high quality standards, implementing a continuous improvement process, and engaging in quality assurance through internal and external review. Accredited schools demand rigor, use data to make informed decisions, and approach the documentation of results with discipline. Accredited schools invite external scrutiny and welcome the constructive feedback of peers.

Who provides accreditation?

Through AdvancED, 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 Pre-K through grade 12 public and private schools and districts in 30 states, the Navajo Nation, the Department of Defense Schools, and Latin America. NCA CASI also accredits non-degree granting post-secondary schools.

NCA CASI and SACS CASI are non-governmental, non-profit organizations founded in 1895. AdvancED is the parent organization for NCA CASI, SACS CASI, and the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE), a research and development organization, and is dedicated to advancing excellence in education worldwide.



What does accreditation mean for the schools in my district?

Being an NCA CASI or SACS CASI accredited school means that schools are provided with:

- A distinctive **mark of quality recognized internationally**, that affords external recognition of the school's commitment to quality
- **Standards** based on educational research and best practice
- **Clear and intuitive processes for school improvement** that are grounded in best practices from the education and business fields
- A **framework and support system** to help meet and exceed local, state, national, and appropriate international requirements
- **Professional development** opportunities such as service on review teams, annual conferences, and state workshops on all aspects of school improvement
- An opportunity to gain valuable input, validation, and **support from peers**
- A connection to the **best practices** of over 23,000 public and private schools
- Customized and **technical assistance** to maximize improvement efforts
- Access to a rich and wide array of **resources and tools** aimed at enhancing improvement efforts

How will our students benefit from accreditation?

Students are the ultimate beneficiaries of the accreditation process. When the entire school is aligned and focused on a shared vision for student learning, students win. They benefit from the enhanced focus on student performance and from greater articulation and coordination as they move from one level of schooling to another. In addition, the NCA CASI and SACS CASI accreditation seals provide an educational currency for student credits that is recognized worldwide, easing the transferability of credits among other accredited schools and enabling access to special programs, *create and scholarships*

How does accreditation fit with state and federal accountability requirements?

AdvancED, the parent organization for NCA CASI and SACS CASI, provides an accreditation process that educators can use to meet local, state, and federal requirements as their schools earn accreditation. While governmental mandates inform schools of what they must accomplish, AdvancED shows schools how to do it by providing them with the process, tools, training, support, and external teams to help them continually meet and exceed mandated expectations.

How do schools earn accreditation?

To earn NCA CASI or SACS CASI accreditation, schools must follow the AdvancED accreditation process, which represents the unified accreditation process of NCA CASI and SACS CASI. Schools must:

1. **Meet the AdvancED standards.** The standards require that schools have a clear vision and purpose; have effective and responsive leadership; have a rigorous curriculum taught through sound, research-based methods; collect, report, and use performance results; provide adequate resources and support for its educational programs; value and communicate with stakeholders; and have a commitment to continuous improvement. The standards are derived from educational research and best practice. They can be viewed and downloaded at www.advanc-ed.org.
2. **Engage in a continuous process of improvement.** Accredited schools are committed to being better today than they were yesterday. The schools identify a shared vision, maintain a school-wide profile of the current reality, establish plans and assess the implementation of interventions, and document the results of their efforts to improve student learning and school effectiveness.
3. **Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review.** Internal review involves the schools and their stakeholders. External review involves feedback from experienced educators outside the schools. In both cases, reviewers examine evidence to determine if schools are meeting the standards and achieving goals for improving

READINESS for AdvancED™ DISTRICT ACCREDITATION

A Self-Assessment of Readiness for District Accreditation

Purpose: This tool is designed to help districts assess their readiness for accreditation by examining the district's practices in relation to the research-based conditions, core tasks, and effective practices of continuously improving schools and districts (NSSE, 2004). This research forms the basis of the AdvancED Accreditation Standards for Quality School Systems. By self-assessing against the research, the district can determine its capacity to meet the AdvancED standards. A matrix detailing the link between the research base and the standards can be found in the appendix to the standards which are available at www.advance-ed.org.

Directions Part A: Review the five necessary conditions (listed below) of improving school district. Use the rating scale described in the key to assess the degree to which your district is engaged in the stated condition.

Key:

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1 Not Evident | Little or no evidence exists |
| 2 Emerging | Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice |
| 3 Operational | Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented |
| 4 Highly Functional | Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented |

Necessary Conditions	1	2	3	4
Effective Leadership The leadership decisions and practices support the vision for student learning				√
Policies and Practices The district has policies and practices in place that support improvement efforts.			√	
Resources and Support Systems The district has the human, technology, and material resources to support improvement efforts.				√
Quality Teachers The recruitment, placement, and professional development of teachers are aligned with the district's vision for student learning.				√
Quality Information An information system which collects, manages, and uses information to support the district's vision is in place in the district.			√	

Directions, Part B: Each category below contains the three core tasks of continuously improving schools. Under each core task are listed the research-based effective practices of continuously improving schools that relate to that task. Examine your district's practices in relation to the research findings listed. Use the rating scale described in the key to assess your practices and determine the level that best describes your district's implementation of the stated practices.

Key:

- | | |
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Please respond to the focus question at the conclusion of each section.

Core Task #1: Ensure Desired Results				
In our district, we <u>expect and ensure desired results</u> by:	1	2	3	4
1. Implementing a vision for student learning through goals and strategies				√
2. Maintaining high expectations for student achievement				√
3. Maintaining a focus on improving student learning that permeates all levels of the district			√	
4. Acting on a compelling, shared belief that, collectively, staff and other stakeholders can impact the desired results of the district.				√
How does the district communicate and maintain focus on results? The district's Strategic Plan on page 10 establishes the primary vehicle and expectation for communication as well as focus on results. This focus on results is operationalized by sharing directly with individual principals and teachers, district, school, and classroom results.				
In our district, we <u>effectively monitor performance</u> by:	1	2	3	4
5. Using data to inform decision-making about teaching and learning				√
6. Using a comprehensive assessment system to provide feedback for improvement in instructional practices and student performance				√
7. Using classroom-based assessments to provide robust measures of students' academic, cognitive, and metacognitive skills			√	
8. Identifying performance targets, indicators, and measures for comparing and improving effectiveness.				√
9. Taking appropriate and timely action to improve areas of identified needs			√	
How does the district use data to guide improvement and to monitor the results of efforts to improve? Both formative and summative data are used to identify, inform, and monitor the results of efforts to improve. This translates into a system that utilizes Mississippi Assessment System data along with data from the Terra Nova Norm Reference Test and teacher developed classroom assessments. Each student group is assessed at least three times annually with specific diagnostic assessment instruments with results used to focus opportunities for improvement while providing a snapshot for maintaining gains.				
Core Task #2: Improve Teaching and Learning				
In our district, we <u>support student learning</u> by:	1	2	3	4
10. Maintaining district-wide expectations for student learning that reflect academic, cognitive, and metacognitive skills			√	
11. Delivering on the expectations for student learning through a coherent and rigorous curriculum				√
12. Aligning an assessment system with curriculum that is enacted through instruction				√
13. Supporting the equitable opportunity of students to learn through individualization and differentiation;			√	
14. Providing student support services and special programs to optimize individual student learning;				√
15. Supporting a student learning community that includes student involvement				√

16. Involving families and the community in supporting children as learners				√
How does the district provide and ensure support for student learning? The core of support for student learning is the district's strategic plan. Each school uses the district's plan to assist in development of school plans that while based on the district's goals specify individual school goals that define how each school will support student learning. These school plans and goals are data driven documents that reflect each school's unique strengths and needs for improvement. Each teacher is then asked to create individual classroom goals that specifically focus on improvement of student learning.				
In our district, we <u>maximize teacher effectiveness</u> by:	1	2	3	4
17. Using instructional strategies that provide students with focus, feedback, and sufficient opportunities to master skills				√
18. Using appropriate strategies to assess the performance of students' academic, cognitive, and metacognitive skills				√
19. Adapting instruction to meet individual needs and engage learners				√
20. Maximizing the use of time for instructions				√
21. Creating classroom environments conducive to learning				√
22. Optimizing technology and multimedia as learning tools				√
How does the district guide and ensure that instruction supports student learning? Staff members are continuously trained on use of data for decision making. Data is used to inform and guide instruction through development of lesson plans that specifically address the personal learning needs of students. A consistent model of career appraisal is also used to help determine progress and levels of implementation of instruction that support student learning.				
Core Task #3: Foster a Culture of Improvement				
In our district, we develop a <u>professional learning community</u> by:	1	2	3	4
23. Sharing a common vision and goals that have student learning as the focus			√	
24. Improving individual and collective performance by coming together regularly for learning, decision-making, problem-solving, and celebration				√
25. Continuously enhancing individual effectiveness through inquiry, practice, and peer reflection			√	
26. Supporting a culture of collegiality, collaboration, respect, and trust			√	
How does the district foster a community of learners dedicated to improvement? By disaggregating data to support decision making and by providing evidence of specifically what needs improvement. Based on these data the district brings together teams to discuss barriers to improvement whether in environment or instructional practices. Finally, a plan of improvement is established with clearly defined measures for assessing the success or lack thereof of the plan of improvement				
In our district, we <u>lead for improvement</u> by:	1	2	3	4
27. Sharing leadership for the improvement of teaching and learning throughout the district			√	
28. Articulating a compelling need for improvement and providing meaningful ways for our professional learning community to focus on its performance			√	
29. Engaging in practices that support the ongoing improvement of teaching and learning			√	

How does the district build the capacity of leaders to provide leadership for improvement? A model of distributed leadership that drives the concept that we are all leaders. Building the idea that we are all accountable for student achievement and learning excellence by enhancing the operating principle that we are student centered first and foremost.