

**Report of the  
Quality Assurance Review Team  
for  
Banner County School**

200 School Street, Box 5  
Harrisburg, Nebraska, United States 69345

**Mr. Travis Miller**  
**Amy Trauernicht, Chairperson - NCA-CASI-NE Team**

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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 at the state level and by the national AdvancED Accreditation Commission. Accreditation is granted by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission and communicated to the school following action from the commission.

## Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the NCA CASI Nebraska State Office (NCA-CASI-NE), a division of AdvancED, visited the Banner County School in Harrisburg, Nebraska, United States on 03/16/2010 - 03/17/2010.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 6 members of the administrative team, 22 students, 7 parents, and 19 teachers. In addition, Board Members, Leadership Team, Support Staff and Community Members 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.

- **Staff and students care for each other and respect the learning environment.**

School was immaculate and well kept. Students were very respectful and polite. Staff work one-on-one with students before and after school in mentorship capacity.

When there is mutual respect and genuine caring between students, staff, and the learning environment, more effective/rigorous learning takes place.

- **Student learning is the focus of Banner County Schools.**

Staff and students work together to set learning goals, assess goals, and adjust curriculum accordingly.

Staff have programs in place to tutor/help students in need. There are also adaptations made for high ability students.

Student learning should be the driving force of all education...Banner County clearly works to help students achieve their fullest.

- **Banner County School's stakeholders show willingness to raise standards to meet the AdvancED criteria.**

All stakeholders aware of importance of high standards. AdvancED process is being taught to stakeholders. Interviews conducted showed the willingness of staff to meet high standards and take the leap into higher accreditation status.

When all stakeholders are knowledgeable of the accreditation process and 'buy in' to it's importance, the school works better as a whole.

## 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.

- **Collaborate school-wide for more effective use of data.**

The district has data available, but often is only used by certain grade levels, administration, or personnel. Data needs to be used across grade levels and across curricular areas to drive instruction. Much of the district's data was collected, but then not used.

Without evaluation and use of data collected, a school does not have direction and cannot better itself.

- **Continue curriculum mapping to produce a written K-12 curriculum guide aligned with state standards.**

No written curriculum is in place at Banner County Schools. Each grade level just teaches/plans independently. The district has begun mapping their curriculum to check for cross-grade alignment as well as alignment with Nebraska standards. In the past, new teachers to the district struggled to know what to teach and what they were responsible for covering in their classes. Banner County Schools are on the right path with this, but need to commit to completing a finished product.

Without K-12 curriculum to guide instruction, it is very difficult to ensure all standards are being covered.

- **Revisit school mission and school improvement goals with stakeholder involvement.**

Some stakeholders interviewed had little or no knowledge of where the mission and goals came from. They just knew they existed.

In order for systemic growth and improvement throughout a school, all stakeholders need to have channels to voice their input.

**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.

## Resources

AdvancED offers a range of resources to support your school as it acts on the findings in this report. The AdvancED Resource Network, available at [www.advanc-ed.org/resourcenetwork](http://www.advanc-ed.org/resourcenetwork), provides an online network of peer-to-peer practices, best practices, and resources and tools designed to help schools with their improvement efforts. Available any where, any time, the network can be queried for information on a variety of school improvement subjects. The AdvancED Research and Development division provides research, handbooks, and tools to assist schools with continuous improvement. In addition, your state office provides hands-on professional development and ongoing technical assistance. Contact your state office for more information on the range of resources available to you.

## Celebrating Accreditation

Following the visit, the Quality Assurance Review Team submits an accreditation recommendation to AdvancED for state review and for action at the national level by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the school. Upon receiving its accreditation, the school should celebrate its achievement with the school community. The NCA-CASI-NE accreditation seals are available at [www.advanc-ed.org/communicationskit](http://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 Banner County 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:**

Banner County School is served by a dedicated staff, forward thinking administrators, and a visionary Board of Education. Interviews, artifacts, and evidence indicate that student need is the driving force in the system. Facilities in the district are clean and free from distractions.

Banner County is served by a six member Board of Education, several of whom have less than three years experience. Evidence indicates that the Board is representative of a community that considers the school a hub of the society and is integral to Harrisburg's existence. The Board supports the administration and collectively feels that Banner County School, the administration, and the educators provide an excellent education for their students. They also believe that the students are respectful and responsible. One of the current School Improvement Goals is respect and responsibility. Staff take pride in this mantra and interactions with faculty and students by members of the Quality Assurance Review Team indicates that it is embedded into the school culture.

The staff at Banner County Schools is comprised of twenty-one certified staff members, twenty-three classified personnel including coaches and bus drivers, one principal and one superintendent. Just under 50% of the certified staff, 33% of the classified, and 100% of the administration were not employed at Banner County Schools when the mission statement was developed.

Classrooms are friendly and inviting. Classroom visitations uncovered high levels of student rigor and engaging K-12 classrooms full of activity, relevant learning, and high student accountability.

Mission Statements and school improvement goals are displayed prominently through-out the school and can be found in most classrooms, hallways, offices, assembly areas, and in the district action plan. Evidence indicates that the Mission statement was created at least six years ago and was created with little stakeholder input. The document was a creation of the Board and is visited each Spring by the Board of Education. Other than surface level knowledge few stakeholders, other than the principal and the steering committee have the history surrounding the creation the document. The current administration is making concentrated efforts to train the Board and stakeholders about the AdvancEd cycle through various networks including but not limited to; the school website, the school paper (The Scratching Post), daily announcements, staff meetings, Board meetings, Board retreats and in-service training.

Evidence indicates limited overall stakeholder voice in the purpose and direction of Banner County

Schools. The mission statement is a broad statement that most stakeholders can readily identify. One interview led to a student's recital of the mission. She was able to articulate what it meant to her, but did not understand how it came to be. The district operates using this vision. Personnel and certain stakeholders can communicate how the statement addresses student needs and provides direction. These expectations, however, cannot be easily linked to student assessment and evidence of student growth. Although student growth in reading and language arts can be demonstrated, data collection of the school improvement goal for respect and responsibility are hard to quantify.

The vision and purpose are in general terms and allocation of associated resources is not expressed. Interviews indicated limited information as to how student need is addressed through the allocation of time, human materials, and fiscal resources although many programs have been started by the current administration that address specific needs as determined by a climate survey conducted in 2008. Bullying programs and an anti-bullying campaign are but one of many issues addressed in recent months to address concerns. Come After To Succeed (CATS), a locally named after school program was started in January of 2010.

This program provides an opportunity for struggling students to optimize their educational time while at Banner County Schools. The mandatory nature of the program demonstrates the dedication of stakeholders and the willingness of the administration and Board to find innovative methods to help all students succeed. The current Board is commended for recent efforts to focus on student achievement and use it to drive decision making at Banner County School. The implementation of CATS is admirable and demonstrates Banner County School's efforts to prepare their students on and off the playing surface.

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

- The Mission statement is evident and many stakeholders can identify it.
- Student learning is the focus at Banner County School.
- The staff, Board are highly concerned about the future of Banner County Schools.
- Students and staff care for each other and respect the learning environment at Banner County School.

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

- Revisit the Mission Statement and school improvement goals.
- Involve multiple stakeholder groups; students, certified staff, classified staff, administration, community, and Board in the process.
- Build capacity through the use of stakeholder input.
- Allocate resources to the understanding of the AdvancEd process.

**Finding:** Banner County School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

## Standard 2. Governance and Leadership

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

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

Banner County School has a very high energy, pro-active principal. His leadership is apparent throughout the district. It is clearly evident that his relationships with all stakeholders are ones of mutual respect. The administration clearly embodies the mission of the school.

Procedures and policies (handbooks, chain of command, organizational charts, emergency plans, Alert Now system, evaluations, etc.) are clearly articulated that ensure effective operation of the school district. They are available through hard copy or the website.

The school leadership ensures that the district is compliant with local, state and federal regulations as evidenced through examination of board minutes, staff handbook and board policy.

Through the use of Power-School, Nebraska Department of Education website, North West Evaluation Association, DIBELS, advisory time, and CATS systematic opportunities are provided for review and analysis of student performance and school effectiveness. Opportunities for credit recovery (NEVA NET) and dual credit ensure equitable learning opportunities that help promote student performance and school effectiveness.

The administration is open to responding to community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction. Stakeholders affirm that leadership hears and acts upon suggestions and recommendations. As evidenced by the student council proposal for school community involvement graduation requirement. The community also views the school as its center. Many community groups hold activities on the school grounds. The school also works closely with the town museum and shares products and grounds for many activities.

Professional growth is evidenced by new staff orientation day, informal mentoring, the rotating professional library, staff working toward master's degrees and the quest for best instructional practices that enhance student learning.

Although, fairly new, the administration is very knowledgeable of the district and its needs. Plans are in place for yearly upgrades and system analysis. The current administration is also the driving force behind the leap to AdvancED accreditation status. The current administration also has a close working relationship with the Board of Education. Stakeholders believe administration is consistent with the rules of application. Due to administrative and staff turnover, opportunities for leadership have emerged with staff and students and it has been embraced.

There are programs in place for teacher leadership. Many staff are on the school's leadership team and have taken ownership of the accreditation process. Teachers also help mentor one another and are a tight knit group. Although, there is only one class section per elementary grade level, the staff seem to collaborate with each other regardless of grade level taught.

Student leadership is also apparent. The student council president leads the daily announcements and

leads the school in the morning recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. Students also run a program, governed by themselves, for students excelling in chosen areas.

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

- Banner County has leaders who are advocates for the learning process.
- Banner County fosters a positive learning community that encompasses all stakeholders. There is strong sense of belonging, “kids needs are put above staff wants.”
- Administration works well with staff.
- Leadership opportunities for all stakeholders.

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

- Encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for school improvement among all stakeholders.
- Allocate resources in support of administration and fledgling programs to fruition.
- Allocate resources such as time, human and/or material that support the school improvement process.

**Finding:** Banner County School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

## Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

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

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

Banner County School develops and implements curriculum based on clearly defined expectations for student learning. For instance, the school is taking steps toward linking student learning to standards through the realignment of state standards in math and reading. Additionally, students understand their own gifts and interests through the implementation of individualized development plans (IDP).

Banner County School uses a master schedule and graduation credit requirements to ensure rigor of classes. Moreover, class requirements are listed in student/teacher/parent handbook, individualized development plans are developed for students 7-12, and course descriptions are posted on the website and in print.

The school district 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. To meet this goal, the district relies upon their master schedule, the Come After to Succeed(CATS) student-mentoring program, Distance Learning(DL) classrooms, and interest inventories for placement of juniors and seniors.

Banner County School gathers, analyzes and uses data and research in making curricular and instructional choices. The school relies upon Sonday Phonics in K-3(4) classrooms, DIBELS, and NWEA (Started at 2nd grade), and classroom assessments (i.e. Saxon Math). Also, CATS requires a collection of data and

student grade reports, Title I and SPED requires DIBELS scores, classroom assessments, and other indicators.

The district designs and uses instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that are research-based and reflective of best practices. Objectives are stated on lesson plans and Direct Instruction teaching strategies are being researched and implemented in the first-grade classroom. Also, staff members have reviewed Marzano's instructional strategies and differentiated instruction strategies are being shared and implemented. Read Naturally is being implemented at the elementary level.

Banner County offers a curriculum that challenges each student to excel, reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an application of diversity. DL and NEVA curriculum options provide increased challenges within the classroom and graduation credits are posted on the website and in the handbook.

Banner County School allocates and protects instructional time to support student learning by providing daily advisory time, instructional calendars for parents and staff, lesson plans with objectives, and plans to incorporate ninety minute reading blocks into the schedule.

Banner County School's curriculum mapping is moving toward completion with the goal of consistent curriculum format across the district. Staff continually increases individual knowledge of state standards and content. The CATS program provides students and staff with additional one-to-one mentoring. School climate surveys have been conducted between parents, students and staff, Staff handbook defines student behavior policies (also website, signage, student handbook).

Media services/resources support student achievement. The district is proactive in their use of technology with dedicated elementary and high school computer labs, and a Promethean board for student interaction and involvement. Elementary teachers have laptops for instructional use and the building is wireless to promote the use of the mobile laptop cart. A line item budget for media services is provided.

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

- The school involves students in the learning process through individualized goal programs based on NWEA, NeSA-R(State Reading Test), NeSA-W(State Writing Test), and DIBELS test data.
- The CATS program and advisory period provide support programs with the sole intent of increasing student achievement and commitment.
- The educational support staff, faculty and administration have the dedication and motivation to provide for all students K-12.

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

- Develop specific K-12 curriculum guides reflective of state standards for all curricular areas. Primary emphasis must be placed on reading and math standards.
- Evaluate current district data with the goal of guiding instruction and implementing instructional strategies to enhance student learning.
- Collaborate across grade levels to ensure the implementation of research based strategies.
- Expand high ability learner(HAL) program to accommodate student learning.

**Finding:** Banner County School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

## Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results

**Standard:** The school enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and school effectiveness.

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

Banner County School collects much data. They have much testing data such as NWEA, DIBELS, Accelerated Reader, NeSA-W and soon to be NeSA-R. They also collect much student data such as absenteeism rates, mobility, grades/eligibility, and poverty. Much of this data is compiled into their secure PowerSchool data program. They also compile data such as budget reports and busing information for board purposes as well.

Banner County School collects such data, but does not always use it to its full potential. Some student performance data is used to determine expectations for student learning. Elementary teachers are evaluating the effectiveness of their instruction through the use of DIBELS and NWEA data. Most often data is used within a grade level or subject area and not school-wide. Often the administration(principal) showed great knowledge of the data, but staff often did not. Most staff knew the data existed and where it was kept, but could not articulate how it was used to drive instruction and school decision making.

Through the use of data, interventions such as CATS, Title I, advanced math placement, Quiz bowl and dual credit options are made available to students. Efforts to share student performance results are communicated through local news media, Banner County School's website, the annual report to patrons and the Nebraska Department of Education website and local venues such as parent teacher conferences.

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

- All stakeholders have access to PowerSchool that provides real time data.
- The school is developing a system for assessing progress towards meeting the expectations for student learning.
- Banner County School maintains a secure, accurate and complete student record system (PowerSchool) in accordance with state and federal regulations.
- Using NWEA, Banner County School demonstrates verifiable growth in student performance.
- Students are embracing the goal setting process and they recognize the relevance.

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

- Involve all staff in data discussions pertaining to student performance in the Banner County School comprehensive assessment system.
- Allocate time to analyze, discuss and share data results across all grade levels.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction and determine interventions to improve student performance K-12.

**Finding:** Banner County School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

## Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems

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

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

Banner County School recruits, employs, and mentors qualified professional staff that are capable of fulfilling assigned roles and responsibilities. Through the use of the website for recruiting, the mentoring program for staff, and procedures and policies regarding hiring practices, Banner County School strives to hire highly qualified staff.

The district assigns professional staff responsibilities based on qualifications. Over ninety-five percent of teachers are teaching in endorsed areas. Professional development opportunities are available and encouraged. Teachers are leaders and share responsibilities between many programs.

To ensure that all staff participate in a continuous program of professional development the district provides five dedicated calendar days for development, staff development notebooks for all teachers, and staff shares information with other district teachers obtained from training sessions.

Staff members are available at each grade level, and small class sizes provide more one-to-one interaction with students. Teachers continually review state standards and expectations, and personnel practices and policies are available and reviewed for updates.

The district adequately uses the proposed annual budget. The district employs dedicated book keeper to ensure smooth operation of finances with administrative and board support. District administration completes all federal/state applications pertinent to the budget, and the school has adequate space to meet learning needs of students.

Facilities are well maintained, clean, and there is in place a yearly plan for upgrades and updates. There are procedures for safety drills, red roster cards in each classroom, and emergency/crisis plans in place. All staff are aware of safety policies and procedures are centralized and documented.

A full-time guidance counselor meets and plans with students to prepare class schedules. Title I and Special Education services are available K-12. Individualized development plans provide students opportunities to select career options.

Title I and SPED needs available throughout K-12. There are certified staff members in Title I and SPED. Policies and procedures comply with state/federal regulations.

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

- Staff resources notebook available to all.
- Shared responsibilities, "multiple hats," to ensure that all educational needs are met for a majority of students.
- Providing full-time Title I and Special Education to the district is a positive indicator for student needs.
- Educational facilities are immaculately well maintained. Maintenance/Custodial staff are

commended.

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

- Develop and implement a consistent student assessment team policy and procedure.
- Expand student and staff mentoring programs.

**Finding:** Banner County 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:**

The district utilizes partnerships with communities to enhance faculty presentations and student learning. Stakeholders participated in a climate survey in 2008.

Banner County School has formal channels to listen to and communicate with stakeholders (i.e. AlertNow system, newsletter, parent teacher conferences, open meetings of school board, and emails). Encouragement of community and parental involvement in student learning is evident.

Banner County School communicates the expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to all stakeholders through parent teacher conferences, the newsletter, the school report to the state, posting of school board meetings, individualized development plans, and report cards.

Banner County School also sends its school newspaper to all postal box holders in the county, regardless if they have students in the school.

Now that Banner County Schools is seeking AdvancED accreditation, more stakeholders need to be involved. The current mission and improvement goals were written before a majority of the staff and administration were employed at Banner County Schools. The mission was written solely by the Board of Education. Not that the mission or goals necessarily needs to change, but should be revisited and discussed with all stakeholders' input.

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

- All stakeholders agree that the school is central to the community and education is pivotal.
- The ample varieties of communication (emails, newsletters to box holders, etc.) available to stakeholders.
- The collaboration of all staff members to create an environment conducive to growth.

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

- Promote continued education of all stakeholders in the knowledge and importance of school improvement.



**Finding:** Banner County School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

## **Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement**

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

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

Banner County School engages in a continuous process of improvement that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing through maintaining a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community.

The district employs goals and interventions to improve student performance, and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next. The district does have a school improvement plan with a preponderance of well articulated signage, maintains a current profile of student population through PowerSchool, and uses data available for instructional decision making.

The variety of efforts to provide communication to the stakeholders in the community (email, newsletter, website, etc.) adequately provides instances of continued effort to include the community in the educational process.

The current school improvement goals align with the current mission and purpose. Professional development is encouraged through five professional development days dedicated throughout the school year. Achieving a higher degree to benefit instruction is promoted.

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

- Commitment toward continuous education is embraced by the entire learning community (students, teachers, and administrators).
- The staff resources notebook serves as an organizational tool available to all staff members.

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

- Acknowledge the effort involved in striving toward school improvement.
- Realize this is a growth process.

**Finding:** Banner County School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has 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-NE accreditation with AdvancED.

# Appendix

## Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Mrs. Amy Trauernicht, Chair (Mitchell Public Schools)
- Mrs. Stacy McDaniel, Vice Chair (Sidney High School)
- Mr. Dan Spatzierath, Team Member (Mitchell High School)
- Ms. Kaci Kearns, Team Member (Mitchell Elementary School)
- Ms. Maribeth Moore, Team Member (Chadron Public Schools)
- null Troy Lurz, Team Member (Chadron High School)

## AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

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