

# Report of the Quality Assurance Review Team for Southwest Miami High School

James R. Haj, Principal

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*AdvancED is the unified organization of the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE).*

# Quality Assurance Review Report

## Contents

About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI .....	3
Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review .....	4
Summary of Findings .....	5
Commendations .....	5
Recommendations .....	6
Next Steps .....	8
Standards for Accreditation .....	10
Standard 1. Vision and Purpose .....	10
Standard 2. Governance and Leadership .....	10
Standard 3. Teaching and Learning .....	12
Standard 4. Documenting and Using Results .....	13
Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems .....	14
Standard 6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships .....	15
Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement .....	16
Conclusion .....	18
Appendix .....	19
Quality Assurance Review Team Members .....	19
AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools .....	19

## About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

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

In 2006, NCA CASI, SACS CASI, and the research and development arm of the accrediting associations, the National Study of School Evaluation, unified to form AdvancED. Dedicated to advancing excellence in education, AdvancED provides accreditation, research, and professional services to 23,000 schools in 65 countries, serving 15 million students.

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

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

**1) Meet the AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools.** Schools demonstrate adherence to the seven AdvancED standards which describe the quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for schools to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness.

**2) Engage in continuous improvement.** Schools implement a continuous improvement process that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing (vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community (profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (results).

**3) Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review.** Schools engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, schools host an external quality assurance review team once every five years. The team evaluates the school's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and recommendations to help the school improve. The team provides an oral exit report to the school and a written report detailing the team's recommendations. The school acts on the team's recommendations and submits a progress report two years following the review.

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

# Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), a division of AdvancED, visited the Southwest Miami High School in Miami, Florida on 12/03/2007 - 12/04/2007.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed the Principal, 5 members of the administrative team, 56 students, 6 parents, and 58 teachers. In addition, team members of 15 Support Personnel and 3 District Personnel were interviewed. The team also reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the school. Specifically, the team examined the school's systems and processes in relation to the seven AdvancED standards:

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

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

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

### Commendations

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

- **The Quality Assurance Review Team commends Southwest Miami Senior High School for establishing a "family-like" environment throughout the school.**

Students indicated that they felt safe, supported and encouraged by the school's staff in general. Many of the teaching staff were alumni of the school who supplied a sense of traditions and expectations as to what it meant to be a Southwest "Eagle".

The school's nurturing environment was inviting and benefitting to students and stakeholders alike

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and seems to be a large reason for the school's success.

- **The Quality Assurance Review Team commends Southwest Miami Senior High School for prioritizing planning during the summer vacation months by hiring key staff to analyze student performance and plan for targeted student instruction for the new school year.** A number of key staff members and administration are hired to work over the summer to disaggregate student performance data and disseminate it to the teaching staff with suggestions on delivering the curriculum. A great deal of this planning also involves transitioning the incoming ninth graders to the Ninth Grade Academy which serves them. This practice assures continuous academic planning for improvement of student performance, strengthens the articulation process between feeder pattern schools, and eliminates much of the delay of instruction due to assessment that normally occurs in the beginning of each school year.
- **The Quality Assurance Review Team commends Southwest Miami Senior High School for creating an attendance policy that requires students to be in class in order to participate in extracurricular activities.** The school properly places emphasis on core learning and academics and couples it with numerous rewards and incentives for achievement. Southwest Miami High School is clearly trying to motivate its students to perform well in academics as well as in the extracurricular programs
- **The Quality Assurance Review Team commends Southwest Miami Senior High School for requiring students to be involved in at least one extracurricular activity per year.**

It is evident that students are highly involved in sports, clubs, music, and all of the activities the school offers outside of the classroom. Many students indicated that they were proud of their school and most seem to have a strong sense of belonging. Southwest Miami mirrors the practices of our nation's military academies by getting students involved in activities that teach leadership and teamwork.

- **The Quality Assurance Review Team commends Southwest Miami Senior High School for its commitment to the *Full Service School Program*.** The *Full Service Program* provides a clinic staffed by registered nurses, counselors, and social service administrators. It also provides referral services for special needs and a parenting information and support program. Although this program may require some school funding, a large number of students and parents utilize the program's services and seem to benefit greatly from it.

## Recommendations

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

- **The Quality Assurance Review Team recommends that Southwest Miami Senior High School involves and coordinates all stakeholders in the development and maintenance of the school improvement plan.**

There was a general knowledge among stakeholders regarding the development of the school improvement plan. The Team recognized that a more in depth approach was needed to truly make this a collaborative process.

Higher achievement is possible when all stakeholders are integrally involved in the production of the total school improvement plan.

- **The Quality Assurance Review Team recommends that Southwest Miami High School examines and reduces the current student /teacher class ratios with regard to honors, gifted, and advanced placement courses.** While the school has very good class size ratios in most areas, particularly in ninth grade, the Team noted higher ratios in many of the advanced courses. The school may have prioritized the sizes in the Ninth Grade Academy with the result of higher loads in other classes. It is as important, however, to have low student-teacher ratios in these courses as well, and the school should make every effort to recognize this and modify loads accordingly. Research supports reduced class size in advanced courses to insure quality instruction, and scheduling should reflect this practice.
- **The Quality Assurance Review Team recommends that Southwest Miami Senior High School works to insure that the various data regarding student performance are analyzed, disseminated to instructors, and incorporated into the delivery of the curriculum and instruction.**

Although there is a procedure in place to retrieve and disseminate student performance data, the Team found a wide range of applications in the classrooms. Attention should be given insuring all teachers use the information and reflect it in their lesson planning.

As data-driven instruction improves across the curriculum, the school's student performance levels should increase.

- **The Quality Assurance Review Team recommends that Southwest Miami Senior High School works with appropriate school district staff to identify and replace/renovate original buildings and classrooms that are no longer suitable for instruction.** The school is composed of a combination of original, new, and modified buildings. The original buildings, specifically former shop areas, are in some cases not suitable for classroom instruction. They are difficult and costly to maintain, and, when the budget allows, should be replaced. The Team recognizes there is a plan developed to do this, but emphasizes the importance of accomplishing this in the near future. The Team, however, feels that the theater building, although needing some renovation, is an asset to the school and should be updated and preserved

The school's ability to provide quality classroom space as part of its school improvement plan is limited by the existing outdated facilities, which should be renovated or replaced as soon as possible.

- **The Quality Assurance Review Team recommends that Southwest Miami Senior High School reviews the school's vision and mission statements on a regular basis to insure they are current and reflect the true mission of the school. Any changes should be communicated to all stakeholders on a regular basis.** Although the school does review and amend its mission, especially with regard to student performance, various stakeholders were

unclear as to the recent changes. The Team recognized the need to further incorporate all of the mission and vision elements into the culture of the school and work towards making these transparent to all.

Ideally the mission/ vision of the school is an integral part of the school's improvement plan and should receive regular and ongoing attention as the "rallying cry" for continuous improvement.

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

## Next Steps

The school should:

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

## Resources

AdvancED offers a range of resources to support your school as it acts on the findings in this report. The AdvancED Resource Network, available at [www.advanc-ed.org/resourcenetwork](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 SACS CASI logo is available through the SACS CASI website for schools to post on their website and in school communications. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and more can be ordered from the website to help

you share your accomplishment with your community.

**Summary**

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

## Standards for Accreditation

The primary requirement for accreditation is that the Southwest Miami 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:**

School personnel indicated that they used a collaborative process to develop the vision and purpose statement. The following process was used at the school level:

- Input was gathered from students, faculty, staff, parents and community members.
- The staff analyzed the results from the school climate survey and the Miami-Dade County Public School's Office of Improvement.
- The vision statement is posted throughout the school, which includes classroom doors and strategic places around the school.

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

Southwest Miami High School personnel merged the mission statement with the 07-08 school theme of "EAGLES: Turn Up the Heat!" to assist students in recalling their purpose in school.

- A variety of stakeholders representing the population of the school were involved in the development of the mission statement. .

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

During an interview, students prompted each other to recall the words that reflected the acronym EAGLES. This may be an indicator that students experienced limited participation in the development of the statement. The development and review of the mission and vision of a school is an evolving process, which requires periodic reviews.

**Finding:** Southwest Miami High 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:**

Southwest Miami Senior High School is a member of the Miami-Dade County School District and thereby has established policies and procedures designed to insure quality school operations. The faculty and staff of the school are provided with clear directions regarding school operations from the district, regions, and various local school administrators. Evidence of this includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- on-line and school hard copies of procedural manuals, including budget, emergencies, technology and use of various instructional technology programs, attendance, scheduling, and all board rules,
- opening and closing of school manuals and bulletins,
- the faculty handbook,
- parent/student handbooks,
- Connect-Ed telephone and communication system for stakeholders,
- comprehensive student cumulative records, and
- on-line attendance and disciplinary systems.

As part of the Miami Dade County District, the school has a clear and efficient system of assessing and monitoring student achievement on a demand basis. This program is used by various staff members who meet regularly to analyze and disseminate data for student performance improvement.

The Dade County School Board meets regularly and televises meetings for those who cannot attend. Results of actions by the Board are disseminated via email, memorandum, district offices, region offices, principal meetings, and faculty and stakeholder meetings.

Southwest Miami High School has a proud tradition of high performance with regard to governance and leadership, and many of its principals have gone on to become leaders within the district. There is clear evidence that the school operates efficiently, has sufficient support, and has a strong leader in Mr. James Haj as its principal.

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

Southwest Senior High School focuses on its mission of ensuring that all students receive the needed instruction and support to enable them to be successful members of society. To that end, the school offers, in addition to its core curriculum, a vast array of programs in vocational, technological, and extracurricular activities. While its focus continues to be academics and student performance, students at the school can specialize in a number of career pathways as they progress. Beginning with a ninth grade academy that specializes in preparing students for high school and supporting learning needs, a student can choose an advanced college preparatory path; a vocation career path in cosmetology and woods; a fine arts track offering music, visual arts, and dance; and a career in the field of finances, to mention a few. Sports, clubs, and a variety of activities support the total school program.

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

Southwest Miami Senior High School should build on its current comprehensive program

strength by evaluating the success of its programs and modifying them, as necessary, to remain viable. The addition of new language programs, for example, is currently being considered and can serve as an example of the type of change that is fundamental to school improvement. Another area proposed by the school leaders is the refurbishment of classrooms and buildings, which will require coordination and cooperation on the part of the school and district. It was clear to the Quality Assurance Review Team (QART) that the governance and leadership process is working well at Southwest and is one of the reasons for the school's success.

**Finding:** Southwest Miami High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

### Standard 3. Teaching and Learning

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

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

The school has implemented several measures to address student achievement including the following:

- administering mini assessments three times per year,
- reviewing data with administration and teachers on a regular basis,
- developing an Instructional focus calendar for reading, math, and writing,
- homogeneously grouping 9th and 10th grade students in reading and math,
- monitoring student progress using the Student Performance Indicator (SPI) system,
- identifying additional students who qualified for the gifted program., and
- increasing the number of students enrolled in advanced placement courses.

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

Southwest Miami Senior High School has a number of practices and strengths that help insure its success:

- The school has implemented a comprehensive approach to transitioning students in 9th grade.
- For continuity, the students meet with their counselors on an individual basis to discuss their progress and remain with the same counselor throughout their high school career.
- All students are required to select at least one extra-curricular activity to participate in during the school year.
- The school administration has implemented a strong system of rewards. which is directly tied to student attendance. As a result of the program, the school has one of the highest attendance records in the school district. Credit recovery classes are available each day after school.

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

Southwest Miami High School should review the following suggestions for improvement:

- review instructional focus calendar monthly to make revisions, as necessary, based on data from SPI or mini-assessments,
- meet quarterly with local middle schools to assess the needs of the outgoing 8th grade students,
- update technology (hardware/software) in the media center when funding becomes available, and
- implement a program to prepare 11th and 12th grade students for college admissions tests.

**Finding:** Southwest Miami High 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:**

Southwest Miami Senior High School has initiated a strong system of accountability, which has at its cornerstone the desire to raise student achievement. In this era of raised expectations based on standardized test scores, Southwest has realized that it is important to focus on more than just the academic aspects of the students' lives. By setting and enforcing rigorous attendance requirements, the tone has been set that what takes place in the classroom is important when it comes to student success.

The practice of hiring staff to work in the summer prior to the beginning of the school year appears beneficial. By taking the time to review the previous FCAT scores (especially with respect to the content areas), areas of focus can be identified and instructional practices put into operation on the first day of school. Southwest, by taking part in the Miami-Dade County Interim Assessment Program, continues to monitor its students' progress throughout the year

In addition to this analysis over the summer, all teachers at Southwest have access to the last two year's of student FCAT scores through a web-based system known as Student Performance Indicators (SPI). Again, the examination of content scores plays an integral part in the development of the curriculum.

Southwest is making gains in enrolling students in rigorous classes such as Advanced Placement. By using the results of the PSAT in conjunction with the AP Potential web-based tool provided by the College Board, the guidance staff is able to identify students who may otherwise not be exposed to these classes. Additionally, the results of the FCAT NRT are examined closely to discover potential applicants for the Gifted program.

Through the media center, students are encouraged to enjoy reading ("Like to Read"). All ninth

grade students are given an orientation with an emphasis on reference and research skills. Each student takes an assessment to determine an appropriate reading level. The results are shared with teachers as well as forming the basis for books read through *Accelerated Reader*.

In summary, the faculty and staff at Miami Southwest High School embraced the use of assessment data as an integral part of the educational process. By focusing on each student as an individual and examining all the pertinent data for that student, the chances for student success are greatly increased.

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

Southwest Miami High School is commended for putting in place a program by which staff members are hired over the summer to examine standardized test scores, as well as other student data, for the purpose of planning for the upcoming year. By doing so during a time that is not normally as hectic as the opening of school, more reflective study of the data is realized, and decisions reached can be implemented starting with the first day of school.

Further, the school is commended for its extended use of the *Pinnacle* electronic gradebook system to monitor student performance and attendance. By encouraging parents to monitor their child's progress, a partnership is created that reinforces to students that what takes place in the classrooms at Southwest is important.

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

The QART suggests that if the school plans to use the results of the annual climate survey that the methodology by which it is distributed to students and parent be reexamined. The current system does not appear to provide statistically valid and reliable results.

Additionally, it is suggested that the school continue to provide in-depth training to all teachers in the use of the various reports provided as a result of the *District Interim Assessment*, especially the item analysis reports. Typically these specific reports provide valuable insights into student misconceptions, which can often easily be resolved.

**Finding:** Southwest Miami High 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:**

Stakeholders shared that the principal is an outstanding leader who has placed the needs of students first in the school community. Many resources have been purchased and programs financed to strengthen the school culture and student academic achievement. These resources include training for teachers, the addition of support staff and the purchasing of technology.

The employment of six guidance counselors, one trust counselor and one emotional/.behavioral counselor has enhanced student support services to provide guidance to students in many areas. Counselors stated that they strive to educate the whole child. They concur that student needs go beyond the academics. This value became a reality when a social worker was employed to extend support services for students.

Perhaps one of the greatest improvements of the school has been the purchasing of technology equipment. The principal has budgeted funds to purchase 500 computers, 80 LCD projectors, 40 Smart Boards, 100 printers, 4 document viewers and a mobile computer lab etc.

The addition of building five has improved the physical plant; however, school personnel are encouraged to work with district personnel to renovate the total facility while preserving the existing theater.

There was a sense of caring about students that radiated throughout the school. This was validated through a review of purchases of student-centered resources that have been maintained or added to the school. Finally, it was evident to the Team that there was an atmosphere at the school, which focuses on the whole student from the training of teachers to analyze student achievement data to support services provided by the guidance and counseling department.

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

The employment of a social worker has made it possible for the guidance department to extend services to meet the needs of more students.

The addition of technology resources in the form of equipment has strengthened the instructional program and has provided a step toward bringing the student body toward more current resources.

The school benefits from many resources to support the safety of students. A partnership with the local law enforcement provides updated information to administrators to prevent disruptive student behaviors.

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

School personnel are encouraged to work with district personnel to renovate the existing buildings and to preserve the existing theater.

**Finding:** Southwest Miami 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:**

The school's communication and relationships provide a plethora of avenues to establish and maintain positive relationships among its stakeholders. For example, the Connect-Ed (automated telephone technology) increased communication with all stakeholders. In addition, effective communications solicit knowledge and skills of its stakeholders. For example, the school communicates with a local bank president to support its Academy of Banking and Finance. Interviews with stakeholders (community leaders, parents, staff and students) revealed a strong commitment to collaboration and shared leadership among all stakeholders to help students learn and advance improvement efforts. To that end, based on the stakeholders' perceptions, the school has a very "nurturing" environment.

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

The school maintains a well-respected reputation in the community. The Team noted several strengths :

- Through the Academy of Banking and Finance courses, students are offered various summer internships to prepare them for the business world. As a result, upon high school graduation, many Southwest Miami High students are well-prepared for the workforce.
- Based on stakeholders' perceptions, the principal, Mr. James Haj, is a "good-hearted" person and has an excellent leadership style.
- Open communications and collaborative efforts synthesize the dissemination of the school's activities and events.
- Use of advanced technology (Connect-Ed and Electronic Gradebook) and the school's website provide immediate access regarding students' performance.

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

The Team offers the following suggestions for improvement and growth:

- develop and implement a plan to increase the number of Dade Partners in order to enhance the work of the school.

**Finding:** Southwest Miami High 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:**

Southwest Miami Senior High School is strongly committed to the school improvement process. There is ample evidence of the establishment of an annual school improvement plan centering on student performance; implementation of that plan in the form of periodic

assessments and surveys, and monitoring of that plan as part of the school, region, and district responsibilities. The Team noted a coordinated effort by school teams to assess student skills on a regular schedule, discuss plans to address any noted areas of concerns, and to enact those plans in the various subject and grade level areas. All of the staff including counselors, media specialists, extracurricular personnel, and parents and stakeholders were involved in making the school better.

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

The Team noted a number of successful practices that enhanced the school improvement process. Examples of this commitment to excellence include the current school improvement plan which revamps the school's action plan to address reading and writing performance. In addition, the school added a ninth grade academy with its own location and programs to insure a good transition from middle school and to address deficiencies noted in previous assessments. Furthermore, summer positions were allocated to enable staff to plan over the summer , providing continuity to the ongoing school improvement process.

The Team observed processes in place that collected data for ongoing analysis and improvement; frequent class visitations by administration; coordinated benchmark testing; targeted instruction to address special needs; focus calendar aligned with curriculum mapping; and emphasis on professional development. Communication among staff towards the goal of school improvement was evident and profound.

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

The school should focus on the improvement of differentiated teaching and learning. In order to successfully integrate the student performance data and benchmark assessment results into the classroom, the teachers need ongoing support and training on how to individualize their lessons. Professional development strategies, mentoring, peer teaching assignments, professional growth planning, and workshops centered on differentiated instruction are recommended.

**Finding:** Southwest Miami High School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" and has met this standard for accreditation.

## Conclusion

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

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

The Quality Assurance Review Team expresses appreciation to James R. Haj, 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 SACS CASI accreditation with AdvancED.

# Appendix

## Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Thomas Shaw, Chair
- Bruce King, Team Member
- Dawna Thornton, Team Member
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## 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.