



Report of the Quality Assurance Review Team for Educational Service Center of Cuyahoga County

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AdvancED is the parent 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 the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE). NCA CASI and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED.

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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 Schools (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, school districts, and education service agencies continuously improve.

The Accreditation Process

To earn and maintain accreditation from NCA CASI or SACS CASI, education service agencies and the schools they operate must:

- 1) Meet the AdvancED Standards for Quality Education Service Agencies.** ESAs demonstrate adherence to the seven AdvancED standards which describe the quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for ESAs to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness.
- 2) Engage in continuous improvement.** ESAs and the schools they operate implement a continuous improvement process that articulates the vision and purpose that the agency is pursuing (vision); maintains a rich and current description of school districts served and their performance, agency effectiveness, and the community (profile); employs goals and interventions to improve learner performance and agency effectiveness (plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (results).
- 3) Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review.** ESAs and the schools they operate engage in a planned process of ongoing internal review and self-assessment. In addition, the agency hosts an external quality assurance review team once every five years. The team evaluates the agency's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards, assesses the efficacy of the agency's improvement process and methods for quality assurance, and provides commendations and recommendations to help the agency improve. The team provides an oral exit report to the agency and a written report detailing the team's recommendations. The agency 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 ESA community in a continuous process of self-evaluation and improvement. The overall aim is to help the agency and its schools maximize learner success and improve organizational effectiveness.

Introduction to the Quality Assurance Review

Purpose

The purpose of the Quality Assurance Review is to:

1. Evaluate the agency's adherence to the AdvancED quality standards.
2. Assess the efficacy of the agency's improvement process and methods for quality assurance.
3. Identify commendations and recommendations to improve the agency and its schools.
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 agency is operating with institutional integrity – that it is fulfilling its vision and mission for its students and other stakeholders.

Agency Preparation

To prepare for the Quality Assurance Review, the agency and its constituents and other stakeholders complete the AdvancED Standards Assessment Report. The report engages the agency in an in-depth self assessment of each of the seven AdvancED standards. The agency identifies and describes the evidence that demonstrates that it is meeting each standard. Through this internal review, the agency examines how its systems and processes contribute to learner performance and agency 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 agency. The team reviews the findings of the agency's internal self-assessment, conducts interviews with representative groups of constituents and other stakeholders, reviews student performance data and other documentation provided by the agency, and observes practices and daily operations. The team engages in professional deliberations to reach consensus on the agency'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 agency and the schools it operates improve.

Using the Report – Acting on the Recommendations

The agency uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The agency is held accountable for addressing the recommendations identified in the report. The AdvancED NCA CASI State Office is available to assist the agency in addressing the recommendations. Two years following the Quality Assurance Review Team visit, the agency must submit a progress report detailing the actions and progress it has made on the team's recommendations. The report is reviewed at the state and national level to ensure the agency 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 by the national AdvancED Accreditation Commission. Accreditation is granted by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission and communicated to the agency following action from the commission.

Summary of Findings

A Quality Assurance Review Team representing the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), a division of AdvancED, visited the Educational Service Center of Cuyahoga County on May 31-June 3, 2009.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed: 17 agency staff, 13 district administrators, 7 school-based administrators, 71 teachers and support staff, 11 parents and business partners, 47 students and 2 members of the Governing Board for a total of 168 stakeholders. In addition to meeting with agency personnel and stakeholders, the team visited four different programs and one local school district served within the ESC's service area. During the school visits, team members interviewed school stakeholders, visited 49 classrooms, and reviewed relevant school artifacts.

Throughout the visit, the team reviewed documents, student performance data, and other artifacts provided by the agency. Specifically, the team examined the agency'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 Quality Assurance Review Team used the standards to guide its review of the agency, looking not only for adherence to individual standards, but also for how the agency and the schools/programs it operates function as a whole and embody the practices and characteristics of a quality education service center. Through its examination of the agency's adherence to the standards, the Quality Assurance Review Team prepared reports on each standard, highlighting strengths and suggestions for improvement specific to each standard. These reports can be found following this summary.

The Quality Assurance Review Team also examined the effectiveness of the agency's methods for quality assurance. The team reviewed the agency's practices and methods to monitor and document improvement, provide meaningful feedback and support across the agency, ensure that AdvancED standards are met and strengthened, and regularly collect, use, and communicate results. The team's findings in this area can be found following the standard reports.

The team used the standard reports and quality assurance findings to identify common themes, significant accomplishments, and pressing needs facing the agency. These became the basis for the overall commendations and recommendations that are provided below. The commendations and recommendations should serve as the focus for the agency as it acts on the team's findings. They represent the areas that the team believes will have the greatest impact in helping the agency further its improvement efforts. The standard reports and quality assurance findings can be used to help reinforce and enrich the agency's understanding of the commendations and recommendations.

Commendations

The Quality Assurance Review Team commends the Educational Service Center of Cuyahoga County (ESC-CC) 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 the ESC-CC for:

- **The ESC-CC collaborates and builds relationships with the districts it serves.**

Evidence gathered during interviews indicates that a broad array of constituents can informally articulate the agency's mission. The agency's partners confirm that the ESC-CC is responsive and supportive of the work of each site. Ongoing monthly meetings with various leadership groups provide the agency's leadership team with information to help them as they build programs needed in the districts. Annual retreats for administrators and leadership from districts within Cuyahoga County as well as the Regional Advisory Council provide opportunities for professional development updates and networking. The agency's Standards Assessment Report (SAR) cites that *through many councils and collaboratives, supervisor and coordinator meetings, email updates and newsletters, all employees are made aware of updates from the Ohio Department of Education and changes at the agency.* District superintendents consider the agency to be an "Epicenter" for the delivery of information.

Providing opportunities to collaborate and network between the agency and its constituents contributes to the positive image of being a leader in the educational field. It also helps establish relationships built on trust and rapport that will increase the likelihood of success for both parties.

- **The ESC-CC implements a distributive leadership model.**

The agency's leadership team reports a high level of cross department communication and collaboration. The staff classifies this as "distributive leadership." Trust, flexibility and confidence are universally perceived as the foundation of the organization. Within the organizational structure between the Governing Board and the agency staff, five sub-committees have been newly created. These sub-committees include business/finance, personnel/policies, insurance, evaluation, and buildings/technology. The task given to each sub-committee is to research practices and/or issues and make recommendations in an advisory capacity. This collaboration, according to interviews, supports facilitation skills, promotes ownership in and among departments, and holds each other accountable for being responsible "servant" leaders.

Being an effective "customer driven" agency in which products, programs, and services are at the heart of its existence, makes it imperative that the agency's leadership "be learners themselves" and responds to issues, practices, and procedures in an informed manner. Following this model sets the stage for its constituents to view the agency staff as innovators and the agency itself as having a "Bigger Voice" in developing a positive school culture.

- **The ESC-CC offers a wide range of services to its constituents.**

The mission statement is *to provide assistance to contracted school districts and agencies in order to offer a broad range of resources to support their mission to serve all learners.* The service areas are local school districts, a fiscal agency, contract services, direct program services, consortium and cooperatives, and interagency programs. The agency's program overview included its focus as a service organization for its customers supporting special education, gifted and talented, and numerous mini-grants. The State Support Team (SST) assists school districts to design professional development; to implement school improvement initiatives, and to learn the latest technical skills to meet the needs of the students they serve. Interviews and artifacts validate that the agency is responsive in meeting the specific needs of the districts/programs. Representative superintendents all rated the services of the agency as very high and the other district representatives rated the agency as high. Rose Mary School achieved 100 percent advanced or accelerated on the alternative assessment of the students in their program. Help Me Grow provides training for parents and support group facilitators. Parent interviews show support for this program and one parent passionately responded, "This program is a lifeline for us."

Being a successful service center involves being a "clearing house" to provide expertise and support to a diverse group of constituents. Willingness to support districts in training, in staffing low incidence situations, in keeping districts abreast of compliance issues and in maximizing resources contribute to customizing the wide range of services offered to the agency's customers, thus fulfilling its mission to *support their mission to serve all learners.*

- **The ESC-CC demonstrates sound fiscal management.**

Artifacts and interviews reveal that the \$80 million budget supports services and expertise to districts and partner agencies. Board policies and procedures provide for the effective operation of the agency, including fiscal oversight. The Governing Board and the administration closely monitor the revenues and expenditures in accordance with Board policy. The analysis of the financial reports provide for detailed and thorough information about the multitude of financial transactions at the ESC-CC. Documents demonstrate transparency in accounting for citizens, taxpayers, clients, investors, and creditors.

Having a financially stable management system enables the agency to offer the programs needed to enrich and service the various school districts which provide services to approximately 220,000 students on an annual basis.

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 learner performance and overall effectiveness of the agency. The Educational Service Center of Cuyahoga County will be held accountable for making progress on each of the recommendations noted in this section. Two years following this review, the agency will be asked to submit a progress report on these recommendations. The agency should refer to the detail provided in the standard reports for guidance and greater depth on the recommendations.

- **Develop a documented comprehensive strategic direction that includes vision, profile, focused plan and a method to evaluate the results.**

In examining artifacts, there is no stated vision. Interviews reveal that even though conversations with various stakeholders validate their understanding of the agency's mission, the vision and purpose were not systematically established, thus, limiting its ability to identify goals and expectations to advance the vision and to revise when appropriate. Agency profile information contained staff members and programs and/or services offered within the agency. A detailed profile containing aggregate data from several sources from which the agency can gain access, student demographic information, and perceptual data gathered from annual graduate exit surveys of member school districts are not evident in the artifacts reviewed. The grants that are operated within the agency have evaluation components as part of the proposal, yet a focused plan consisting of goals, strategies, and evaluation components for the total agency is not documented in a systematic manner.

Having a process to formally create, review, and revise the vision, goals and expectations will enable the staff to study possible opportunities for future work and service and will provide an overall method of evaluating agency effectiveness. Setting a strategic direction is timely when there is a transition of leadership.

- **Assess the need to expand content area/curricular services that are not currently available.**

Interviews with representative directors indicate a need for increasing opportunities for curriculum directors to collaborate on a variety of initiatives that are common to all of them. The primary focus areas for service offerings have been on special education, gifted and talented issues, and State Support Team improvement efforts. There is no content or curricular service provided by the agency. Evidence supports that some of the districts have gone "outside" to secure these services.

Using a process that will assess the need for expanding content area/curricular services will strengthen the collaborative efforts between districts and the agency and it will give the staff an opportunity to formally apply and analyze a needs assessment of the agency's overall programs.

- **Formalize a communication/marketing plan for agency services.**

A formalized communication plan as part of a comprehensive marketing and branding plan is not evident in artifacts or in interviews with stakeholders. There is a “marketing” folder stating the agency’s mission and services provided; however, there is no evidence that a formal plan to facilitate input or to collaborate with various constituents and partners to share their successful programs and services exists.

Face to face meetings, newsletters which are distributed to only the three local school districts, and emails seem to be primary sources of communicating about services and programs. Interviews reveal that some of the stakeholders are not aware of all that the agency has to offer and/or that there is no formal way to give input or suggestions for improving or expanding services.

By developing a formal plan with stakeholder involvement, the agency will increase the knowledge of services and programs; will focus resources on critical goals, and will give recognition to employees and collaborative partners in regard to program and organizational achievements.

- **Establish a comprehensive systematic process to evaluate, document, and monitor performance data.**

During interviews it was evident that stakeholders recognize the responsiveness and supportive nature of the agency of each work site. However, there is little evidence of a comprehensive or systematic approach to using data to make decisions for the delivery of services to improve teaching and learning or to monitor performance data from programs at various work sites. The agency staff believes it must have a strategic direction that is fluid because it is a service agency and its customers are constantly changing; however, the lack of a formalized plan may hinder its own future growth and development and limit its organizational effectiveness. Evidence of systematic implementation of the goals is not found. Interviews with district representatives indicate a need for the agency to codify the goal setting and evaluation process. Using trend data and/or formulated comparisons to the work of similar educational services centers are not incorporated in evaluating organizational effectiveness.

Incorporating measurable performance benchmarks into a plan that derives data will contribute to improving the agency’s effectiveness and will help document performance data.

Next Steps

The agency should:

1. Review and discuss the findings from this report with all constituents and other stakeholders.
2. Ensure that plans are in place to embed and sustain the strengths noted in the commendations section to maximize their impact on learner performance and the effectiveness of the agency.
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 agency's efforts to improve learner performance and agency 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 agency as it acts on the findings in this report. The AdvancED Innovation Division provides online resources, research, handbooks, and tools to assist schools, districts and ESCs with continuous improvement. In addition, your state office provides hands-on professional development and ongoing technical assistance. Contact your state office for assistance in accessing these resources.

Celebrating Accreditation

Following the visit, the Quality Assurance Review Team submits an accreditation recommendation to AdvancED for review and action at the national level by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission, which confers accreditation and communicates it to the agency. Upon receiving its accreditation, the agency should celebrate its achievement with the community. The NCA CASI accreditation seals are available at www.advanced.org/communicationskit for accredited schools, districts and education service agencies to post on their website and to use in 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 ESA, the schools it operates, and its community in an ongoing journey of continuous improvement. The next steps in this journey are to build on the commendations and address the recommendations noted in this report. Doing so will enable the agency to advance in its quest for excellence and deepen the fulfillment of its mission for those it serves.

Standard Reports

The primary requirement for accreditation is that the education service agency demonstrates that it meets the seven standards for accreditation. The Quality Assurance Review Team divided into standard teams to review each standard and prepare a standards report summarizing the team's findings. These standard reports, along with the quality assurance findings that follow these reports, provided the basis for the team's identification of over-arching commendations and recommendations presented earlier in this report. The reports submitted by each team are provided on the following pages for the agency's review and use. Each report reflects its respective team's unique voice, perspective, and deliberations. The reports can be used to help enrich and deepen the agency's understanding of the overall commendations and recommendations.

Vision and Purpose

STANDARD: The agency establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for the continuous improvement of the performance of learners and the effectiveness of the services being provided by the agency.

Impact Statement: An agency is successful in meeting this standard when it commits to a shared purpose and direction. The leadership establishes expectations for continuous improvement of student learning aligned with the agency's vision that is supported by personnel and external constituents. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing learner performance and system effectiveness. The agency's vision guides allocations of time as well as human, material, and fiscal resources.

Description

The Educational Service Center of Cuyahoga County's (ESC-CC) mission statement is "to provide assistance to contracted school districts and agencies in order to offer a broad range of resources to support their mission to serve all learners." The specific strategies are to provide "quality service" that is "valued and needed" on a cost efficient basis. The service areas are local school districts, a fiscal agency, contract services, direct program services, consortium and cooperatives, and interagency programs. Quality at the agency is defined as "a customer/client satisfaction wherein their needs and values are being served."

There have been many conversations among staff and advisory groups including the Cuyahoga County superintendents, Regional Advisory Council, P-16 Council, local superintendents, All County Board of Education Meetings, Touchdown Meetings and directors communicating the agency's mission to its constituents that build understanding and support. However, a stated vision by the ESC-CC is not evident. The team did not find evidence that the vision was "systematically reviewed and revised." It is apparent that constituents have not felt the need to do so.

The Educational Service Center of Cuyahoga County has created its partnership and purpose, its agency goals, and its foundation of the mission. The purpose/mission ideas serve as an umbrella to create common understandings and language, a focus for action, and consensus.

To advance its mission, the ESC-CC has established agency goals or 'focus areas' which include:

build and sustain relationships that advance the mission; pursue responsible systems and resource management; provide services that accelerate achievement; continue to be a high performing and healthy organization, and communicate effectively. Although the agency goals were displayed in the PowerPoint presentation provided during the overview, a more prevalent display and distribution of the agency goals was not evident. Evidence gathered during interviews indicates that a broad array of constituents can informally articulate the agency's mission. They can generally link or connect that mission to the agency's "Partnerships and Purpose" and the "Foundation of the Mission." Best understood and most often cited as examples of the mission-in-action are several services currently being implemented. These include the State Support Team, gifted and talented, and services to learners with special needs from birth through young adulthood.

An agency profile is not evident other than indicating the names of member schools and program offerings. A profile containing student perceptual data gathered from annual graduate exit surveys of member school districts could provide information that constituents need including an annual services report.

Strengths

The team noted several successful practices deserving of recognition:

- There is a strong alignment of practically every aspect of the agency to the mission. Members of the visiting team feel the mission permeates the entire organization.
- The vision is observed in the actions and heard in the conversations exemplifying the collaborative efforts of a successful and productive team.

Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement

The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Develop a process to formally create, review, and revise the vision of the agency on a regular basis. A helpful tool concerning vision creation, review and revision might be the use of an environmental scan to study possible futures the agency might encounter. The organization is adept at the process informally, but a formal process would assist everyone on staff in seeing opportunities for future work and service.
- Create an on-line agency profile summarizing aggregate data from several sources from which the agency can gain access. This group data could include student demographic and special education program information, specific services offered, evidence of data collection, resources available, and affiliations with the Ohio Department of Education.

Finding

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of **emerging**, indicating that the Educational Service Center of Cuyahoga County has not met the accreditation requirements for the Vision and Purpose standard.

Governance and Leadership

STANDARD: The agency provides governance and leadership that promote the continuous improvement of the performance of learners and agency effectiveness.

Impact Statement: An agency is successful in meeting this standard when its leaders advocate for the agency's vision and improvement efforts. The leaders provide direction and allocate resources to implement services and programs that enable staff and students to achieve expectations for their learning. Leaders function with clearly defined authority and responsibility and encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for improvement among constituents. The agency's policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure advocacy for quality of learning and support for innovation.

Description

In 1914, the Cuyahoga County Educational Service Center was formed. The agency supplies special education, supervisory, administrative, fiscal, and other needed services to area school districts in Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Summit Counties.

The agency operates under a locally-elected five member Governing Board form of government and provides educational services as mandated by state or federal agencies to one exempted village, three local, and twenty-seven city school districts and two career centers in Cuyahoga County. Additional contracted services are also presently provided to twenty-three other city, exempted village, local, joint vocational or cooperative education school districts outside of Cuyahoga County. The Board controls the Service Center's staff to provide services to approximately 220,000 students on an annual basis.

The Governing Board is responsible for the adoption of board policies and the employment of and annual performances reviews for the superintendent and the treasurer. Board of Education policies are available in written copy upon request. Compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations is present. Said policies and procedures provide for the effective operation of the agency, including fiscal oversight.

While there are no requirements for the agency identified in the Ohio Revised Code nor does the State Department of Education specify any budgetary guidelines to be followed, it is evident that sound fiscal management in the government sector is illustrated in the financial documentation made available. The budget is based on accounting for certain transactions on a basis of cash receipts, disbursements, and encumbrances with the most significant budgeted fund being the general fund. The agency continues to be financially stable and is able to offer the programs needed to enrich and service the various school districts. The Board and administration closely monitor the revenues and expenditures in accordance with board policy.

The analysis of the financial reports provides for detailed and thorough information about the multitude of financial transactions at the agency. Documents demonstrate transparency in accounting for citizens, taxpayers, clients, investors, and creditors. Detailed information is readily

available to illustrate the revenues and expenditures of the organization at large, including documented evidence of the damage incurred by the historic flood of the agency's property in 2006.

Total assets have increased in recent years due to the additional cash balance at the end of each fiscal year, the increase in grant funding received, the collection of accounts receivable, and the capital renovation program involving the administrative building, computer center, and professional development center. However, it should be noted that evidence of school district payments are sometimes erratic in nature despite the collected effort of personnel to encourage timely payments from member school districts receiving services. Such practices may pose a financial liability. While many outside factors can and will affect the economy and base operations, it is noted that evidence demonstrates a commitment by the agency to provide the best possible services in a fiscally responsible manner now and in future years. The agency appears to be evaluating its programs and expanding its services where it can provide cost effective opportunities necessary for districts. Cost effective services to district clients is the guiding mission.

Many partnerships exist within the auspices of the agency, some of which are jointly governed through direct participation of senior level administrators. These organizations include, but may not be limited to, the Lakeshore Northeast Ohio Computer Association (LNOCA), the Cuyahoga Media Center, and the Positive Education Program.

The Governing Board of each jointly governed organization is diversified in nature, but includes representation from senior leadership of the agency. The respective Governing Boards exercise total control over the operation of the organization including budgeting, appropriating, contracting, and designating management. For these specific organizations, the ESC-CC serves as the fiscal agent. Such leadership provides for the opportunity to build public support, secure sufficient resources, and to act as a steward of the agency resources committed.

Strengths

The team noted several successful practices deserving of recognition:

- The Governing Board is a publicly elected local Board whose diverse membership provides for continuity of service in regularly scheduled monthly meetings and special meetings, as necessary.
- The superintendent and treasurer provide for continuity within the organization via their long-standing history and sustained level of high quality leadership.
- A distributed leadership model with empowered constituents is present within its culture and provides for the professional autonomy necessary to meet district needs. The personnel at all levels of the organization have a "voice" for continuous improvement.
- Fiscally responsible forecasting, planning, and decision-making practices continue to result in healthy financial outcomes.
- High-quality programming and service solutions available at moderate costs enable the agency to attract and retain school district participation for Cuyahoga and surrounding counties annually.

- The foresight and desire to establish a professional development center provides for multiple opportunities for districts to actively engage in a multitude of professional development opportunities.
- The agency has clearly established the framework necessary to integrate the State Support Teams into member districts as required by the State Department of Education. Evidence of quality controls for customer satisfaction is noted based upon interviews conducted during this assessment process.
- Strong leadership affords member districts with the support essential to create, implement, and sustain continuous improvement processes necessary to meet student needs.
- Effective formal and informal networking with districts provides for the opportunity for district representatives to actively participate, co-chair, or chair affiliated committees.

Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement

The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Enhance communication strategies by incorporating Board policies and Administrative Guidelines into the website to permit all stakeholders to have up-to-date access electronically.
- Enact policies, guidelines, and procedures to ensure the prompt and timely payment for services or programming facilitated to guarantee the overall financial stability.
- Align and communicate program objectives, goals, directions, and desired outcomes of the P-16 Council, the Regional Advisory Council, special education programming, and other like initiatives with stakeholders involved.
- Expand opportunities within the organization for district participation in shared decision-making processes.
- Enhance professional performance with more direct involvement, supervision, and evaluation of agency personnel.
- Recognize, preserve, redefine, and balance the executive, administrative, and leadership prerogatives of the administrative heads of the agency, present and forthcoming. The facilitation and creation of a strategic plan for the agency will contribute to the successful transition of leadership.

Finding

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of **operational**, indicating that the Educational Service Center of Cuyahoga County has met the accreditation requirements for the Governance and Leadership standard.

Teaching and Learning

STANDARD: The agency promotes and supports research-based curriculum and instructional methods that enable constituents to facilitate achievement for all learners.

Impact Statement: An agency is successful in meeting this standard when it promotes and supports curricula based on clearly defined, rigorous, and appropriately challenging expectations for student learning that provide opportunities for all learners to acquire essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The agency advocates for the use of proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process; provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations; and give learners feedback to improve their performance.

Description

The Educational Service Center of Cuyahoga County promotes and supports curricula based on defined and challenging expectations for student learning while providing opportunities for all learners to gain essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes. There are multiple examples from the site visits with descriptions of such opportunities. Staff expresses satisfaction with the abundance of professional learning opportunities. The agency demonstrates the support of alignment between the curriculum and instructional practices with implementation across the agency. Collaboration is evident in comments made by the staff of the agency and by staff of the member districts. The curriculum directors are appreciative of the current collaboration among the agency staff and expressed a desire to expand this throughout the districts. The staff members of the agency collaborate in planning and execution of their support. The agency provides multiple opportunities to consistently support its schools and districts in their use of research-based, instructional practices that actively engage learners in the learning process, providing frequent opportunities for learners to apply their knowledge/skills to real work situations, giving learners regular feedback to improve their performance and updated information from the Ohio Department of Education. The site visits confirm the frequent opportunities and are referred to as ‘above and beyond.’ The special education and gifted staff are adamant about the support in these areas.

The agency provides the updated forms required by the Ohio Department of Education as part of the staff development sessions to train them with the correct usage of such forms. The products, programs, and services that are made available to districts include curriculum mapping and assessment, gifted education, walk-throughs, incorporating technology in the classroom, school improvement, grants, dual credit, instructional support, and supplemental education services. The areas in teacher preparation include entry year and mentor support, Pathwise, Praxis, and High-Quality teacher training.

Strengths

The team noted several successful practices deserving of recognition:

- The artifacts include multiple examples of professional learning opportunities for special education, early learning and school readiness, use of newly revised forms, and updates from the Ohio Department of Education.
- The agency has a noticeable strength for building relationships with district staff. Their leadership models the expectations of customer service. The transition for students from school to school and grade to grade is highly respected and valued. This was mentioned many times during interviews at the site visits by parents and staff.
- The passion for highly successful and educationally sound practices is absolutely noticed during several conversations at the agency and the site visits.
- The partnerships with the local university to offer college credit for professional learning are advantages for participants.
- The physical building for professional learning contributes to the success for member districts due to the convenience and availability for various size audiences and their multi-faceted needs including technology support.
- There are times when students are brought together across the districts to participate in projects. The authenticity engages students with life skills for their future use.
- A number of successful grants benefit the member districts in various areas.

Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement

The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Assess the need for increasing support in curriculum/content areas not currently available.
- Increase the time spent with the curriculum directors in collaboration on a variety of initiatives that are common to all of them.

Finding

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of **Operational**, indicating that the Educational Service Center of Cuyahoga County has met the accreditation requirements for the Teaching and Learning standard.

Documenting and Using Results

STANDARD: The agency enacts a comprehensive system of organizational evaluation that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve the agency's effectiveness.

Impact Statement: An agency is successful in meeting this standard when it uses a comprehensive system of organizational evaluation based on clearly defined performance measures. The evaluation system is used to assess the agency's performance based on its goals and expectations; to identify gaps in performance; to evaluate the effectiveness of its services; and to determine strategies for improvement. The evaluation system yields timely and accurate information that is meaningful and useful to agency leaders, staff, and constituents in understanding the agency's effectiveness in support of the continuous improvement of student learning.

Description

Although there are over 50 Educational Service Centers across the state, there are few that provide the multitude of services and programs as that of the ESC of Cuyahoga County. Based on geographical regions and populations, the Educational Service Centers that represent Columbus and Cincinnati would represent a similar number of students and districts as that of Cuyahoga County. Considering this fact, with an understanding that comparing a comprehensive program is difficult in the environment designed to meet specific district needs, the ESC-CC has not used any trend data or formulated comparisons to the work of similar ESCs or to other ESCs in the northern region of Ohio. The phenomenon that all ESCs are very different from each other is recognized by the Ohio Educational Service Center Association (OESCA).

During the interviews with employees, parents, administrators and other stakeholders at the various facilities, as well as the programs in which the agency partners to provide staff, clearly the agency is responsive and supportive of the work of each site. The agency provides professional development to meet the perceived needs of each facility. The professional development that is provided is in partnership with the work of the State Support Team as well as other opportunities provided by the agency. However, there is little evidence of a comprehensive or systematic approach to utilizing data to make decisions for the delivery of services to improve teaching and learning.

The agency has employees working in the school districts in the county and the region. In the interviews that were conducted in the local district, it is evident that the employees are embedded in the documentation and utilization of data to improve student achievement. Considering that all ESC-CC employees are serving special education needs of the district, they are trained to use data to improve instruction and make appropriate accommodations to improve student achievement and meet the needs of the student and school.

The leadership team determines what programs are needed for districts and they work to meet the needs of the district. The ongoing monthly meetings with various leadership groups provide the leadership team with the information to build such programs. During discussions with members of the leadership team, it is verified that initial conversations toward establishing a comprehensive plan has begun to include a dedicated researcher or research firm to assist in this process.

The agency enacts a plan of documenting and using results specifically in the successful completion of grants that are awarded. During the discovery process, it is clear that the agency has been very successful in writing and receiving grants. Successful grant writing includes documentation that meets a variety of data collection and reporting criteria and sound fiscal practices. Many partners, including local, state, and federal agencies look to the ESC-CC as a leader in this area. It is clear that the agency is very successful and has the capacity to meet the needs of documenting and using results as evident in the depth and breadth of work required to meet Ohio Department of Education standards for the State Support Team Region 3 work and the grant proposals that are noted in the artifacts.

The agency successfully uses qualitative data as a result of their strong relationship and continuous communication via phone and email on a daily basis with stakeholders including superintendents, special education directors, curriculum directors, partners, and stakeholders in the county. This form of communication and feedback has served the ESC-CC well in past years, but currently there is no evidence of a comprehensive system of evaluation that serves all programs that clearly defines performance measures and yields valid and viable results.

Strengths

The team noted several successful practices deserving of recognition:

- The ESC-CC is a state leader in grant management and has proven to be outstanding at securing, implementing, and providing supporting data in this area.
- The superintendents, curriculum directors, special education directors, and program directors indicate they are pleased with the services and responses to their needs.
- Partnerships with other organizations help to educate the most difficult students that the districts need to serve.
- The State Support Team uses data to assist school districts to design professional development and school improvement initiatives by co-planning and modeling the “trainer of trainers” approach.
- The ESC-CC is referred to as an “Epicenter” for the delivery of information.
- Rose Mary School, North Coast Academy, and Help Me Grow are examples of programs that promote student success.

Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement

The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Develop a comprehensive, internal, systematic process that includes the evaluation of grants, projects, programs, staff and initiatives that assist in the delivery of services to improve teaching and learning and organizational improvement.

- Develop a process that will constantly monitor and report results to leadership and constituents of the agency.
- Identify effective methods of displaying the data that is collected based upon the work of the agency.
- Update data regularly and make it available in print and on the website. This information should be used to assess the value of the support and work that the agency has provided to the particular district that they serve and Cuyahoga County.
- Recognize similarities of the various districts based on data in order to pull those districts together for collaborative opportunities and specific professional development opportunities.

Finding

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of **emerging** indicating that the Educational Service Center has not met the accreditation requirements for the Documenting and Using Results standard.

Resource and Support Systems

STANDARD: The agency has the resources necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure the delivery of services and programs that support all learners.

Impact Statement: An agency is successful in meeting this standard when it deploys sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement programs and services that support teaching and learning and constituent services. The agency employs and allocates staff that is well qualified for their assignments. The agency provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff to improve their effectiveness. The agency ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

Description

The ESC-CC has demonstrated that it has the resources necessary to support its mission and to ensure the delivery of services and programs. The agency anticipates a substantial carryover in the 2008 budget. The agency employs approximately 975 staff in 31 Northeastern Ohio school districts and special education programs throughout Cuyahoga County. Processes are in place to recruit, employ, retain and mentor qualified staff in these positions. A first-year entry program is established for all first year teachers. Staff is assigned based on district/program needs and in accordance with appropriate state and federal statutes. School district officials and program managers confirm their approval of the staff assigned to them as well as the procedures in place to improve staff performance as well as reassignment procedures for chronically low performing individuals. Generally, there is a low turnover among staff. A staff evaluation procedure is evident. Tenured teachers have an option to use a personalized goal setting procedure in lieu of the traditional checklist format.

Evidence was presented of budgeting procedures for the current year which ensures sufficient resources to support programs and services. All financial transactions are audited annually by the state auditor. However, due to a backlog in the Auditor office, the last audit was completed in August 2007.

The agency owns three buildings on its campus in Valley View, Ohio: the administration building, the LNOCA Technology Center and the Professional Development Center. All of the buildings are in excellent condition. A service contract with a property manager provides for ongoing maintenance services.

Technology infrastructure and equipment are updated, accessible and sufficient to accomplish its goals. Close proximity to the LNOCA Technology Center provides additional opportunities to access emerging technology tools.

The agency provides sufficient support services to meet the health, counseling, nutrition, safety, co-curricular, transportation and special learning needs of the 1800 disabled students under its direct supervision.

Strengths

The team noted several successful practices deserving of recognition:

- Through prudent fiscal planning, the agency has amassed a significant carryover. This reserve amount contributes flexibility to develop additional programming and to capture future opportunities.
- The facilities are first rate. The recently opened Professional Development Center is a significant benefit for the region and has positioned the agency as a hub for professional development activities.
- A web-based comprehensive Employee Handbook is in place.
- The informal professional networks of the agency staff are a valuable source of current research and legislative information which make it an epicenter of valuable information for its customers.

Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement

The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Develop an entry plan for administrative and classified staff that is comparable to the program for first year teachers.
- Create a structured orientation program for new superintendents and superintendents new to Cuyahoga County.
- Design a security and crisis management plan for the administrative site.

- Implement a process for having agreements and board policies reviewed by legal counsel and adjusted, where necessary, to ensure that the ESC-CC has every legal option available to collect delinquent accounts.
- Assess current financial data to determine the ramifications of expanding services.
- Create a long-term financial planning document.
- Develop an Annual Report, profile or similar document that will be a significant asset to the marketing efforts of the ESC-CC.
- Strong consideration should be given to increasing the curricular services offered by the ESC-CC. Due to state initiatives required of all school districts, there may be opportunities for the agency in this area.
- Consider adjusting the staff evaluation documents to include a goal setting narrative section where the individual can formalize a few personal goals that are tied to agency goals for that evaluation period.
- Where possible, serve as a catalyst to bring school districts together to collaborate on issues of common interest.
- Expand and integrate innovative uses of technology such as Wikis, Twitter, blogs, and webinars to improve work place efficiency and performance for customers.

Finding

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of **operational** indicating that the Educational Service Center of Cuyahoga County has met the accreditation requirements for the Resource and Support Systems standard.

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

STANDARD: The agency fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its constituents and other stakeholders.

Impact Statement: An agency is successful in meeting this standard when it has the understanding, commitment, and support of its constituents and other stakeholders. Agency personnel seek opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership among its constituents and other stakeholders to help students learn and advance improvement efforts.

Description

Cuyahoga County Education Service Center strives to promote effective communication and relationships with and among its constituents and other stakeholders. However, most of this communication is informal and does not provide a systemic approach. The agency has an internal newsletter, an external newsletter distributed only to the three local districts, a web-based personnel handbook, an organizational website, a professional development advisory committee, significant community agency and college/university partnerships, and numerous customers that are “raving fans.” Communicating the goals and expectations for service in support of learning to all constituents and other stakeholders is “emerging” in the self-assessment status for this standard. Trust, flexibility, competence, and confidence are universally perceived as the foundation of the organization

Strengths

The team noted several successful practices deserving of recognition:

- Numerous employees, agency leaders and constituents consistently voice the organizational focus of promoting student achievement.
- Superintendents, community groups and employees consistently rate the performance and function of the agency as very high.
- There is a high level of cross department communication and collaboration.

Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement

The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Develop a communication plan as a part of a comprehensive marketing and branding plan.
- Facilitate input and collaboration in the development of communication and marketing strategies from the various constituents and partners in their successful programs and services. By developing a formal plan with stakeholder involvement, the agency will increase the knowledge of services and programs, focus resources on critical goals, and give recognition to employees and collaborative partners in regard to program and organizational achievements.

Findings

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of **emerging**, indicating that the Educational Service Center of Cuyahoga County has not met the accreditation requirements for the Stakeholder Communications and Relationships standard.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

STANDARD: The agency establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that positively impacts services and programs in support of learning.

Impact Statement: An agency is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement. New improvement efforts are informed by the results of earlier efforts through reflection and assessment of the improvement process.

Description

The Cuyahoga County Educational Service Center provides direction and assistance for its customers and stakeholders to support their continuous improvement efforts. The agency believes it must have a strategic direction that is fluid because it is a service agency and customer needs are constantly changing; however, the lack of a formalized plan may hinder its own future growth and development and limit its organizational effectiveness. The agency must be commended for pursuing accreditation to establish this audit as a foundation for developing a formal strategic improvement plan. The goals cited during the accreditation visit are global in nature but do not appear in formalized documentation. Evidence of systematic implementation of the goals is not found. Goals cited include: build and sustain relationships that advance the mission; pursue responsible systems and resource management; provide services that accelerate achievement; be a highly performing and healthy organization; and, communicate effectively.

Customers interviewed during the visit indicate that they are very pleased with the quality of services provided. It is obvious that elements of a plan are inherently present, since key leaders were on extended absences for the last several months and the activities of the ESC-CC continue. A change in leadership will happen in the near future due to the retirement of the current superintendent. Interview evidence indicates a strong desire to engage in a review cycle to codify the vision, profile, action plan, services, and an overall method of evaluating agency effectiveness to meet district needs.

Strengths

The team noted several successful practices deserving of recognition:

- Application for accreditation exhibits a healthy indicator of the passion and dedication exhibited by the entire staff to be learners themselves and to maintain a quest for excellence.
- The team received commentaries that praise the agency for its efforts to keep its customers informed and up-dated on new improvement strategies/interventions that impact learning.
- Specifically, the professional development and technical assistance offered to its customers to implement the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) are to be applauded.
- Repeatedly, the customers praised the staff for their dedication to assist in any way necessary to improve student achievement.

Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement

The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in this standard area:

- Develop a documented comprehensive strategic direction that includes a vision, profile, action plan, services, and a comprehensive method to evaluate results.
- Develop a plan that is representative of all agency stakeholders.
- Incorporate measurable performance benchmarks into the plan that will derive data to continually improve the agency's effectiveness.

Finding

Based on the evidence reviewed, the Quality Assurance Review Team has assigned the overall assessment level of **emerging**, indicating that the Educational Service Center has not met the accreditation requirements for the Commitment to Continuous Improvement standard.

Quality Assurance Findings

The Quality Assurance Review Team examined the effectiveness of the agency's methods for quality assurance. The team reviewed the agency's practices and methods to monitor and document improvement, provide meaningful feedback and support across the agency, ensure that AdvancED standards are met and strengthened, and regularly collect, use, and communicate results. The team provides the following findings in this area.

Description

The agency has been very successful in writing and receiving grants. Successful grant writing includes documentation that meets a variety of data collection, reporting criteria, and sound fiscal practices. It is clear that the agency has the capacity to meet the needs of documenting and using results as evident in the depth and breadth of work required to meet grant requirements. The agency successfully uses qualitative data as a result of their strong relationships and informal continuous communication with districts. This form of communication has served the agency well in past years, but currently there is no evidence of a comprehensive system of evaluation that serves all programs that clearly defines performance measures and yields valid and viable results. The agency is tasked with monitoring and guiding improvement with programs in the school districts it serves. The Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) is "focused on improving the academic achievement of all students and student groups. The agency is used as a resource to implement the OIP framework which has a stated goal of "presenting a unified system of support through a focused plan."

The agency is pursuing accreditation to serve as a foundation for developing a formal strategic improvement plan. Currently, the agency lacks having a formally stated vision; a detailed profile of its constituents and services as well as performance data; a documented plan that is aligned with the vision/purpose, goals and expectations to determine what is working, what should be added, and what should not be continued.

Using advisory councils, monthly meetings, and communication with various stakeholders are

examples of strategies in place to seek input and to gather satisfaction data. Collecting and communicating the results to impact school districts are not as evident as communicating information about changes in the agency and current information about education happenings from the department of education.

Strengths

The team noted several successful practices deserving of recognition:

- There is a dedicated person on staff responsible for research and marketing ideas.
- The agency has the capacity to document and use results as evident from previous work with numerous grants.
- The agency is pursuing accreditation to provide a foundation for strategic planning.
- The agency is to implement the Ohio Improvement Process to monitor and improve programs within their districts.

Suggestions and Opportunities for Improvement

The team offers the following suggestions and opportunities for improvement in the area of quality assurance:

- Implement the OIP to guide the agency's own improvement efforts within the agency.
- Incorporate the OIP components with accreditation standards to design a model for documenting continuous improvement.
- Formalize a plan that focuses on collecting and communicating results that will impact school districts served.

Conclusion

The commendations and recommendations in this report are designed to focus the agency on those areas that will have the greatest impact on learner performance and agency effectiveness. While powerful in potential, the commendations and recommendations only have meaning when acted upon by the agency. The strength of this report lies in the agency's commitment to using the findings to continuously improve. The key is action. The agency 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 agency will need to address. Two years following this review, the agency 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 Dr. Jennifer Felker and Paula Kucinic, key agency accreditation contacts, members of the professional staff, students, parents and other community representatives for hosting the review team. The team expresses its gratefulness to Dr. Harry Eastridge for initiating the idea for Educational Service Centers to become accredited. The team wishes the agency and its constituents much success in the quest for excellence through NCA CASI accreditation with AdvancED.

Appendix

Quality Assurance Review Team Members

Linda S. Little, Chair (NC) currently serves as Associate Director for NC SACS CASI/AdvancED. She previously served as an adjunct instructor for East Carolina University, an elementary school principal, a K-12 supervisor for a local school district, a consultant for the Northwest Regional Center through the Department of Public Instruction, a project director, and a classroom teacher.

Sharon Zimmers, Vice Chair (OH) currently serves as Director of OH NCA CASI/AdvancED. She previously served as superintendent for the Dublin City Schools and also the Perrysburg Exempted Village Schools. For the last several years, she has taught graduate level classes for the University of Dayton. She is a member of BASA, ASCD, and has served as president of the Ohio ASCD. Dr. Zimmers is a member of the Dublin AM Rotary and active in numerous community service projects.

Brian Bontempo, (OH) currently serves as the Assistant Superintendent at the Lake County Educational Service Center. He has previously served as the Principal of Willoughby South High School, Assistant Principal of Willoughby South and Twinsburg Middle School, Director of Technology of Mayfield Schools, Adjunct Professor at John Carroll University, Head Wrestling Coach and classroom teacher.

Gayle Reidenbach, (OH) currently serves as an educational consultant for the ESC of Central Ohio. She coordinates the gifted program for the South-Western City Schools and provides professional learning opportunities for multiple districts including the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP). She previously served as the curriculum director for Delaware City Schools, an elementary principal, a district K-12 math specialist, co-president of the teacher's union, a classroom teacher, a math consultant for SRA-McGraw Hill, and an adjunct professor for Ohio Wesleyan and Ashland University.

Michael Sawyers, (OH) currently serves as the Superintendent of the Perry Local Schools in Lake County, Ohio. A former teacher, athletic director, administrative intern, assistant principal, deputy principal, director of curriculum and instruction, and director of human resources, he has a Master's Degree and post-graduate coursework in educational leadership from the University of Akron, Kent State University, Cleveland State University, Baldwin Wallace College, and Ashland University. Mr. Sawyers is presently participating in the Standards Aligned Instructional Leadership Program to complete his doctoral degree via North Central University.

Dan Shoemake, (NE) currently serves as Administrator/CEO of Educational Service Unit No. 6, Inc. in Milford, Nebraska. He previously was Executive Director of North Country Education Service Agency in Gorham, New Hampshire. Previous to that, Dan served as superintendent, assistant superintendent, principal and director of special education in Kansas, Illinois and Minnesota. Dan is completing his 30th year in public school administration. His education career began as a special education, adult education, sociology and psychology teacher for a total of 8 years.

Jeff West, (NE) currently serves as the Administrator of Educational Service Unit 13 in Scottsbluff, Nebraska. ESU 13 serves 21 school districts covering 15,000 square miles in the panhandle of Nebraska. Jeff is currently an adjunct instructor in the Educational Administration Department for the University of Nebraska at Kearney. Previously, Jeff spent the last 17 years in administrative positions as an elementary, middle and high school principal as well as a superintendent. Jeff began his educational career as an algebra and science teacher.

Denny Woods, (OH) currently is a retired school superintendent who led the Bay Village City School District for eight years and the Sandy Valley Local School District for four years. More recently, he was the Executive Director of the Greater Cleveland School Superintendents' Association and the Assistant Executive Director of the Ohio Schools Council. Currently, he is the President of BayView Consulting, LLC.

AdvancED Standards for Quality Education Service Agencies (ESAs)

The **AdvancED** Standards for Education Service Agencies are comprehensive statements of quality practices and conditions that research and best practice indicate are necessary for agencies to achieve quality learner performance and organizational effectiveness. As ESAs reach higher levels of implementation of the standards, they will have a greater capacity to support ever-increasing learner performance and organizational effectiveness. Each of the seven standards listed below has corresponding indicators and impact statements which can be accessed at www.advanc-ed.org.

Vision and Purpose

The agency establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for continuous improvement of the performance of learners and the effectiveness of the services being provided by the agency.

Governance and Leadership

The agency provides governance and leadership that promote the continuous improvement of the performance of learners and agency effectiveness.

Teaching and Learning

The agency promotes and supports research-based curriculum and instructional methods that enable constituents to facilitate achievement for all learners.

Documenting and Using Results

The agency enacts a comprehensive system of organizational evaluation that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve the agency's effectiveness.

Resource and Support Systems

The agency has the resources necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure the delivery of services and programs that support all learners.

Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

The agency fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its constituents and other stakeholders.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The agency establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that positively impacts services and programs in support of learning.