

# Report of the Quality Assurance Review Team for Heritage Preparatory School

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Review Dates: 04/21/2008 - 04/22/2008



*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

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## About AdvancED and NCA CASI/SACS CASI

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

In 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 Heritage Preparatory School in Atlanta, Georgia on 04/21/2008 - 04/22/2008.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed the Headmaster, 3 members of the administrative team, 12 students, 9 parents, and 9 teachers. In addition, team members of 5 Board Members and 3 Support 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.

- **Various types of data are collected and used to revise curriculum standards and to inform instruction, including nationally-normed test results, teacher anecdotal records, classroom performance, etc. Heritage staff members understand various types of assessment data and when to use each type to make curricular and instructional decisions.**

QAR team members were able to confirm a data-driven model of instruction through review of artifacts and interviews with staff members.

Because the true impact of the classical curriculum cannot be measured with traditional assessments, it is important that Heritage implement a variety of instructional assessment

models. The desired outcomes from the classical model require an understanding of the use of data that is far different from a traditional school model.

- **An extraordinary sense of community/family is valued by students, parents, and staff members.**

All stakeholders expressed their appreciation for the sense of family that is evident in the school. Because the school is small, parents, students, and staff members know each other. But this sense of family comes more from a deliberate decision to become a community rather than just a result of size. Parents are interviewed extensively during the admissions process to be sure the school is a good "fit" for the family and the family is a good "fit" for the school.

Because of the clear mission of Heritage, it is important that all stakeholders share in its vision. The sense of family brings with it a commitment to the school that makes Heritage a special place.

- **The board of directors and head of school provide strong leadership that is visionary, consistent, and faithful to the mission.**

Teachers refer to the head of school as their shepherd, reporting that he provides professional leadership and personal support. During interviews, board members explained the various talents that each brings to the school leadership. They carefully select future board members based on their knowledge and skills as well as their understanding of and support for the school's mission.

Consistent, visionary, and faithful leadership is important for Heritage Preparatory School to grow and maintain quality in its instructional program.

- **The school's teachers and staff members understand and embrace the structure of its classical curriculum; additionally, students understand the components of classical curriculum, including the developmental components of reading, learning, and narrating.**

Classroom observations and interviews support the implementation of the classical curriculum by both staff members and students. Students typically respond that they are studying mathematics or the quadratic equation, for example. However, Heritage students are able to articulate what they are doing and why within the classical curriculum model.

Such an understanding of and support for the classical curriculum and instruction will enable teachers to remain true to the model and students to apply themselves to maximize student learning.

- **The school's mission is well articulated and integrated throughout all facets of operation, including curriculum standards, instructional model, teacher training, extra-curricular activities, etc.**

As evidenced through interviews with parents, students, teachers, administrators and board of directors, as well as observations of classrooms and review of documents, the school's mission is the driving force behind everything that happens at Heritage Preparatory School. Every decision and action by the school is intentionally focused on its mission.

Such clear statement of mission and faithfulness to that mission will provide consistency as the school plans for expected growth in enrollment and addition of upper grade levels.

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## 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.

- **Continue to explore opportunities to manage growth in order to assure quality and consistency with the school's vision as funding becomes available**

Heritage Preparatory School is facing almost certain growth in enrollment. Past growth indicates a moderate rate of increase each year. Parents, administrators, board members, and current enrollment data for next school year indicate that growth is inevitable and desirable.

School facilities currently are sufficient for its student body. However, with continued growth, expansion will be inevitable. Managed growth is important to maintain consistency and faithfulness to the classical model of curriculum and instruction that the school embraces.

- **Review the school improvement process and revise the school improvement plan annually to make the necessary adjustments needed in both organizational and instructional effectiveness to ensure educational excellence.**

Staff members and parents were able to articulate various improvement efforts in recent years under the leadership of the current head of school. Board members were able to verbalize their vision for school improvement for the future. However, school leadership indicated that the formal school improvement plan was developed for the first time in preparation for the accreditation visit. The SIP includes a process for annual revision and expansion of the plan.

A deliberate and consistent effort for planning for improvement is essential for continued excellence in education. Bringing stakeholders together to plan for improvement will strengthen the sense of family and consistency of services that Heritage enjoys.

- **Evaluate the current staffing pattern and staff responsibilities for the purpose of better providing professional counselling and media services as enrollment expands to include high school grades.**

Teacher and administrator interviews confirmed that Heritage Preparatory School teachers currently provide guidance counseling and media services for its students with help from parent volunteers.

As the school grows in enrollment and grade levels, it will become increasingly important that these services be expanded in each area. Scheduling the use of the media center as well as managing the expansion of the collection and use of technology for research are some of the responsibilities that need to be addressed. As the high school grades are added, essential services including course selection, academic preparation for college, and career guidance need to be provided.

**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 Heritage Preparatory 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:**

The school establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for all stakeholders throughout the school community. School leaders are intentional in seeking parents and students who share the same understanding and commitment for a classical Christ-centered education. Interviews with the staff members, students, parents and board members revealed a strong knowledge of the school's mission and a commitment to make sure that the school stays true to its mission. Websites, Parent-Student Handbooks, in-home visits, parent prayer groups, Parent Orientation, Parent Education Night, etc., provide a wide range of opportunities to communicate the vision and purpose. School data profiles, ERB testing scores, surveys, research and analysis of other school programs, sister school programs, and community information provide useful information regarding student performance, school effectiveness, and stakeholder perceptions.

The school has adopted and developed a curriculum which is challenging, distinctly Christian, and directly aligned with the mission of the school. The director of Instruction provides regular teacher supervision to ensure the vision, purpose and goals are accomplished and that quality and consistency are maintained. Student learning goals have been established to guide the teaching and learning process and to assure each individual student's growth and success. Regular communication with parents regarding the individual student's strengths and needs empowers the parents to share in the goals for student learning and the effectiveness of the program.

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

- The school leadership clearly states, guides, reinforces, and exemplifies the mission of the school.
- Stakeholders are passionately committed to the vision and purpose.

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

- Continue efforts to assure that the school's mission and vision will be supported by all stakeholders and will provide the framework for future growth.

**Finding:** Heritage Preparatory School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" 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:**

The QAR team observed copious evidence that the board of directors and head of school provide governance that is supportive of school effectiveness and student-performance. The working relationship between the board and the head of school is exemplary. Evidence exists, both in writing and in observations, that the board establishes policy and oversees the overall operation of the school. The head of school has an administrative role, working with parents, admissions, general direction of the program, and day-to-day operations. The board supports the head of school's desire to define his role as more of an executive position, as evidenced in the active search to hire a principal to absorb some of the daily operational duties. The head of school provides educational opportunities for the board to better understand the day-to-day components of the school's classical model of instruction. The board provides resources, such as outside consulting firms, to better equip the school's leadership team.

Teachers, parents, and students are given opportunities to assume leadership roles and have input in the general operation and policies of Heritage Preparatory School. Teachers participate in leadership beyond their regular classroom duties by acting as coordinators, advisors, or volunteers in other areas. They also participate in weekly team meetings with co-teachers and/or administrators. Parents have a voice in school life by belonging to the Parent Council, volunteering at the school, joining various committees, supporting extra-curricular activities, and providing spiritual leadership. Middle school students have frequent opportunities for leadership through participation in Student Council, attending weekly lunches with the head of school, assisting in event coordination, and leading mentoring teams during lunch twice a week with younger students. All stakeholders have an opportunity to contribute to the decision-making processes due to the pervasive atmosphere of open communication.

Teachers and members of the board of directors expressed respect and admiration for the head of school. His visionary and tireless leadership brings life to a school that struggled with securing leadership for a number of years. Teachers and staff members shared that he not only asks the tough questions and holds high expectations that assure quality of instruction, but he also cares for each member of the Heritage family personally.

Due to the desire to provide more at-home time for students and parents, the school offers selected extra-curricular activities, such as chess club, running club, and team sports, that are consistent with the school's vision and mission. Students and parents interviewed expressed a desire to see more extra-curricular options, especially as the size of the school continues to grow. Students expressed a desire to have some choice in curricular studies as they progressed into middle school through optional "specials." Currently all students take the same "specials" classes.

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

- Parents, teachers, and students have a variety of meaningful opportunities to participate in the decision-making process.
- The board of directors and head of school work well together to provide strong leadership for Heritage Preparatory School.
- The school maximizes use of outside resources to supplement areas of need.

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

- Continue the process of evolving the role of head of school to focus more on executive functions.
- Consider expanding the extra-curricular activities sponsored by the school that would be consistent with its vision and mission.
- As the school enrollment grows, consider expanding curricular electives for students that will allow students to pursue topics according to individual interests within the framework of the school's mission and vision.
- Continue to provide the board of directors educational opportunities similar to teachers, so that members have a clear understanding of the instructional components involved in implementing the classical education model.

**Finding:** Heritage Preparatory 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 curriculum in its broadest terms is influenced by Charlotte Mason, a classical educator from mid-nineteenth century England. The school profile describes Charlotte Mason's teaching methods as "taking advantage of a child's natural curiosity and delight in discovery." Many of the ideas and methods are used to facilitate achievement for all students. Language-eliciting activities (Narration, Dictation, Recitation, Literature and Picture Studies) were observed at all levels and classes. Students demonstrated their learning in oral and written forms. The cultivation of good habits such as kindness, listening and attentiveness, respect, order and follow-through was clearly evident through student interviews and observations. Heritage also studies the classical works of art, literature, and history ("classical" being defined as "any work that every generation has read, studied, or cared about either because of its beauty and excellence or because of its influence and commentary on life"). The Bible, great poetry, hymns and literature from Christian devotion are included in the classical curriculum. The materials chosen have "stood the test of time" and are "living books."

There are clearly-defined expectations for student learning as listed in curriculum maps and guides. Teachers collaborate and align lessons to accomplish the expectations for student learning. Interventions such as remedial work, re-teaching and retesting are in place to accommodate academic diversity and to help students meet expectations for student learning. Parents are actively engaged in the learning process of their own children. Limited days for younger students ensure that the learning process is maximized at the most opportune time and that appropriate time is devoted to family activities and play. A great deal of time and effort has been given to educating teachers and parents in understanding the Heritage classical educational model.

Current media services that support instruction and learning are provided by classroom teachers and parent volunteers. Because classes and overall enrollment are small, this arrangement seems to meet student learning needs. Students have access to sufficient technology to do research for reports and to make presentations. A new technology lab is staffed with a teacher who guides student learning in technology. The school improvement plan indicates a need to provide a trained person who can teach students to use a variety of media and technical resources for research, exploration, and discovery of topics aligned with the curriculum (i.e., showing students, especially middle school students, appropriate websites and search engines on the Internet for use in research and report writing).

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

- All stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, staff, and administrators) understand and embrace the classical educational model.
- The students were actively and enthusiastically engaged in their own learning. Many were very articulate and confident in expressing what they were learning and genuinely appreciative for their opportunities to learn in a Christian environment.
- Teachers were seen as caring and genuinely interested in helping students to succeed and to appreciate their talents.
- The curriculum mapping and lesson guides demonstrate the classical model and how it is embedded in lessons, day to day opportunities, and life experiences.

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

- Implement current plans to improve media services by providing better opportunities for teaching students to use a variety of media and technical resources for research, exploration, and discovery of topics aligned with the curriculum.

**Finding:** Heritage Preparatory 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:**

Heritage Preparatory School employs various methods to assess learning, including classroom assessments, trimester comment cards, anecdotal records, and ERB CTP4 nationally-normed standardized tests. Because of the unique nature of the classical curriculum, various measures are needed in order to adequately assess whether students know and are able to do what the curriculum proposes. Through staff development sessions each year, teachers are taught how to measure student progress using classroom assessments. Teachers keep files on the academic progress of each student, using these files to inform parents and facilitate their support in educating the children. Each fall the receiving teacher discusses student files with the sending teacher to assure vertical articulation of the curriculum for each child individually.

Teachers are also taught how to interpret and utilize ERB CTP4 scores to inform instruction. Student performance on the CTP4 also guides revision and adjustments to Heritage's curriculum map. Teachers cited a recent example to the QAR team regarding student performance in writing. As a result of what the school considered a weakness in student writing skills as reported by CTP4 score reports, staff development was provided for teachers to improve writing instruction in their classrooms.

Informal measures such as anecdotal records indicate that students who leave Heritage at the end of eighth grade or to attend another school at lower grades seem to perform well after having been educated with the Heritage classical education model. A number of parents and teachers cited specific examples of students who were successful in other challenging learning environments after having left Heritage.

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

- School leadership personnel and teachers understand that their unique classical curriculum demands a variety of assessments rather than just traditional pencil and paper tests.
- The CTP4 is used to measure traditional student academic expectations, and those results are used to support student learning within the classical curriculum.
- Various staff development activities are conducted to provide teachers the support they need to effectively assess student learning.

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

- Track and survey students leaving Heritage and moving on to other educational opportunities as to their preparedness to meet their new expectations. Use the data gathered to evaluate learning goals.

**Finding:** Heritage Preparatory School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" 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:**

The school does an excellent job of recruiting, employing, and mentoring professional staff. One indicator of the level of quality of the faculty and staff is reflected in the credentials of each person employed. The QAR team reviewed credential documentation, evidence of certification, continued professional growth, licensure, and/or baccalaureate degree in areas of teaching assignment. Other indicators such as parent, teacher and student interviews supported the same conclusion. The teachers have a strong role in and understanding of the classical education approach. Interviews indicated that teachers were very satisfied, engaged, and had invested in the school's vision. Class sizes were consistently small throughout the grades. Teachers provided counseling services for students; teachers and parent volunteers assisted students in the media center without the support of a media specialist. Because of the small student body, this assignment of media and counseling responsibilities seems to be sufficient.

Staff members are provided with focused staff development activities that result from identified student learning needs. This staff development is planned before school begins and during the school year. Because of the clear expectations for student learning and behavior, new teachers are given extensive training before school begins. They are also paired with a veteran teacher who reinforces the Heritage model throughout the year.

The QAR team found that students, teachers and staff are satisfied with the resources they are provided for day to day operations. Best practices are being used with budgets, financial transactions, audited accounting system as evidenced by supporting documents. The site and facilities are clean, well kept and provide an atmosphere that is conducive to learning. The facility is protected with locked doors, security camera at the front entrance, and a security officer available at morning carpool. There is a strong feeling from students, teachers and administrators that the facility is safe. An emergency crisis plan exists, but all staff members are not aware of its provisions.

The school has experienced steady growth since its first year, with a controlled growth occurring each year as higher grade levels have been added and classes have been added at existing grade levels. School leaders expect that growth to continue and are making plans to support that growth in all areas, including adding high school grade levels within the next five years. The school is negotiating with Morningside Baptist Church to use two floors of another building that will be renovated and provide much needed space. Additionally, there are plans to construct another building in the future as enrollment expands.

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

- Heritage pairs a new and a veteran teacher in order to indoctrinate new staff members with the school's curriculum, instruction, and operational models more efficiently and effectively.
- Safety measures were highly effective for a school in this urban setting.

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

- Consideration should be given to provide counselling and media services as the school's enrolment grows and grade levels expand.

- The school's emergency crisis plan should continue to be developed; all teachers and staff members should receive training on implementing the plan.

**Finding:** Heritage Preparatory 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 preponderance of evidence shows that the school has the support, understanding, and commitment of the stakeholders. The school clearly fosters an environment designed to support student learning as defined in the vision of the school. Understanding of both the formal and informal channels of communication between stakeholders and administration is clearly evident to all stakeholder groups. Parents understood the expectations for student learning and the goals that were set for students and the school. The School Assessment Report indicated that the head of school conducts a home visit with each family.

Teachers provide parents weekly feedback on student academic and behavioral performance as well as regular parent conference opportunities. Heritage provides a strong foundation for open communication through the Parent Fall Preview, Parent Orientation, workshops for specific grades, Parent Education Nights, Parent Coffees, Monday Memos, handbooks, and prayer times. The Parent Council works closely with school leadership to assist in communication among all stakeholders.

Teachers receive initial training in the classical education philosophy through new teacher training. This philosophy is then reiterated to teachers through extensive opportunities for continuing education, including retreats, conferences, and training by consultants. Middle school students have formal opportunities to provide feedback to the head of school through weekly Student Council meetings. Elementary students expressed a desire to have more input and leadership opportunities similar to that enjoyed by the middle school students.

The school demonstrates responsiveness to the needs of the stakeholders, including local community and church members, by actively participating in neighborhood association meetings, maintaining a supportive relationship with church staff and members, and communicating school goals to community leadership. The school has nurtured a mutually respectful and cooperative relationship with Morningside Baptist Church and the neighboring community. The school anticipates an extended lease on the property and facilities and is planning future renovations and expansion to accommodate growth.

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

- Extensive examples were provided during interviews with stakeholders as evidence that the school communicates with them effectively and frequently.
- Heritage leadership from the board and head of school nurtured a strong and mutually respectful relationship with both the school's host church and neighboring community.

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

- Consider finding ways to provide more opportunities for input and leadership for older elementary students.

**Finding:** Heritage Preparatory School has earned the overall assessment level of "Highly Functional" 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:**

Heritage Preparatory School has engaged in continuous improvement that is consistent with the school's mission and vision since its inception. However, the school leadership began its first formal school improvement process in preparation for accreditation. The school improvement plan that was developed includes reviewing the school's mission and vision statements, board structure, extra-curricular activities, curriculum and instruction, the media center, student assessment, facilities, professional development, and stakeholder involvement. Much of the plan calls for action this summer or next school year. However, actions are planned for three to five years as well. While the plan is quite extensive, it is consistent with the mission and vision of the school. It provides clear guidance for school improvement. Additionally, the plan includes a process for annual review of school improvement and assessment of progress toward established goals that includes many stakeholder groups.

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

- The school is to be commended for its initial efforts at writing a school improvement plan. The plan is comprehensive and thorough.

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

- The school improvement plan constructed by the Heritage Preparatory school is ambitious. The QAR team recommends that the school continue with its plans for school improvement by assuring that its goals are focused and attainable.

**Finding:** Heritage Preparatory School has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" 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 W. D. Owens, 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

- Pam Adamson, Chair
- Linda Crawford, Team Member
- Lynn McKinnon, Team Member
- Mark Hopkins, Team Member

## 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.