

# Report of the Quality Assurance Review Team for International School of Aruba

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

# Quality Assurance Review Report

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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 International School of Aruba in Oranjestad, All States/Provinces (Netherlands Antilles) on 05/06/2008 - 05/10/2008.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed the Headmaster, 3 members of the administrative team, 17 students, 9 parents, and 26 teachers. In addition, team members of Student Leadership, Faculty Representative Groups (4) and Parent Leadership 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.

- **Students are provided with special leadership development, extra-curricular enrichments, and community service opportunities which contribute to the strong evidence relating to very impressive students' deportment and service to their island community.**

This is reflective in their strong participation in the following programs:

- Student Government

- National Honor and Junior National Honor Societies
- MUN
- Aruban Youth Parliament
- CAN IT
- Beach Cleanup

Through these efforts, students are developing strong leadership abilities and the awareness of their environmental issues.

On a frequent basis the service and leadership programs are featured in various internal and greater Island of Aruba publications and other expressions of appreciation.

- **The after-school academic support program is worthy of strong recognition and emulation at other accredited international schools. Parents and students expressed their strong enthusiasm for the on-going success of this program and perceived it as a major component of the school's success.**

Maintenance of this program demonstrates deep commitment to meeting the full scope of learning needs of all students. In view of the financial limitations, and in lieu of a special needs program, the academic support program still fulfills the support needs of exceptional students as well those in need of additional help.

The school benefits tremendously from this phase of the program within the parameters of studied achievement, student-teacher relationships, and a genuine enhanced love for learning.

- **The purchase of a suitable parcel of land and the creation of the current facilities has permitted the school to better service its primary constituencies. Since August 2004 when the site was dedicated and opened to provide a more secure and appropriate general environment for its students and faculty, much of importance has been achieved.**

The former site in the southern sector of the island was essentially within a non-inviting, ancient office building. The close proximity to a functional oil refinery with belching flames, questionable air quality, and inconvenient travel distances for a majority of the students contributed to a series of significant negative issues.

It is realized that the current location of the school still has some limited spatial issues related to instruction and activities, minor safety situations which have been verbalized and are in need of attention, and the implementation of short/moderate term appropriate planning related to further enhancement and utilization of the facilities. Despite the furtherance of required facilities review and subsequent actions, the campus site is a splendid improvement from the prior location and structure!

- **The faculty and administration are cited for their demonstrated willingness, ability, and flexibility to provide a comprehensive educational program with a relatively small staff.**

Many teachers have six or more preparations and/or class assignments in their schedules. All are required to sponsor after-school activities as part of their assignments. The faculty operates with fewer support services than would be typical in a larger school.

Strong teacher and administrative commitments have resulted in an educational program that parents, through interviews and surveys, recognize as the best opportunity available on the Island of Aruba and within other sections of the Caribbean.

## 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.

- **Explore avenues for securing additional human resources to contribute to a broadening of the scope of the program within the parameters of part-time instruction (enrichment or basic courses) from the local community, curriculum planning from a more pronounced school-to-school association, and professional development from additional regional and U.S. sources.**

The Quality Assurance Review Team (QART) found that internal sources for broader program enhancements are already stretched to uncomfortable limits as observed within the schedule. Comments from several constituencies further confirmed this finding. Innovative inclusions of new assistances would revitalize certain aspects of the program.

Innovative inclusions of new assistances would definitely invigorate certain aspects of the program where limitations currently exist.

- **Explore and implement a communications networks to include more faculty awareness into portions of the decision-making processes. This would help to mesh the entire elementary and secondary faculties and the administration.**

Teachers expressed to the Quality Assurance Review Team (QART) a desire to perform a broader role in decisions regarding curriculum planning, professional development opportunities, and overall program changes. This includes interactions between elementary and secondary faculties and between teachers and administration.

By improving communications or at least the counterproductive perceptions, there would be greater cohesion and buy-in of global institutional decisions by the faculty.

- **Establish a system for gathering, interpreting, and using standardized test results to identify growth in student learning and to guide instruction.**

Standardized test results from the previous year should be analyzed and given comprehensive consideration in planning and the development of curriculum.

Through discussions between faculty and administration, an effective consensus will be reached on how best to use assessment results to achieve expected student learning outcomes. This professional and respectful interchange will strengthen considerably the mutual envisioned high level of student achievement.

- **Explore every possibly viable avenue in order to attract and retain the highest qualities of professional staff. The leadership should consider the development of a more attractive and competitive salary and benefits packages, a more pronounced professional development program, and the intensified exploration of solutions to either eliminate or neutralize the current visa complexities.**

Review of the high staff turn-over statistical data, the cost of living on the expensive island of Aruba, and perspectives shared verbally and via written data revealed that many aspects of staff successes and stability require serious attention.

Any school is only as strong as the human entities which deliver the optimal pursuance of educational richness. The successful and harmonious delivery of the instructional and administrative programs is predicated upon positive leadership and support personnel attitudes, appropriate institutional commitments, and professional fairness.

- **Develop a comprehensive marketing program in an effort to stabilize enrollment and the resultant financial status of the school.**

In recent years enrollment has fluctuated by as much as twenty percent. Current enrollment is less than eighty percent of the capacity of the facilities. The impending sale of Valero Oil, which accounts for a significant portion of the clientele, exacerbates the potential for further fluctuation.

Investments in strategies such as the recent “Open Day” and the increased media coverage of student activities could increase interest in segments of the local community and help achieve economy of scale that will address some of the financial limitations currently restricting school development and delivery of a comprehensive program.

- **Establish a data-driven, long-range planning process to guide and provide consistency to its school improvement efforts.**

In the course of the accreditation review process, teachers and administrators verbally identified many critical needs of the school and some potential strategies for addressing them. These components emerged in interviews, but few of these beliefs are in writing; available resources to address them have not been identified; there has been no attempt to prioritize needs; responsibilities have not been assigned, and no comprehensive time frames have been defined. Without these components in place, a plan for improvement is likely to be haphazard, ineffective, and frustrating to all concerned.

A well-articulated planning process will pay dividends in program improvement as well as in maintaining the high level of commitment that is currently a strength of the school.

- **Draft and refine clearly-worded statements to clarify purpose, intended clientele, and vision for the foreseeable future of the school.**

The current mission statement, which is prominently displayed throughout the campus, was drafted for the accreditation visit of 2000. Its relevance to the current school and clientele has not been considered by the majority of the staff and other constituencies who have arrived since that date. There is no evidence of any vision statement describing what the school should be presently and in the future.

Without these discussions and the resultant written agreements, the board and the school community will have an insufficient philosophical foundation with which to focus efforts to improve the quality of the program.

**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

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report. Doing so will enable the school to advance in its quest for excellence and deepen the fulfillment of its mission for all students.

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# Standards for Accreditation

The primary requirement for accreditation is that the International School of Aruba 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 improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the school.

In preparation for the Quality Assurance Review Team's visit, the faculty reviewed the existing mission statement of the school. This review was apparently the first that had been done since the arrival of the previous headmaster in 2003. The statement to be reviewed had been drafted for the accreditation visit of 2000. Members of the Steering Committee reported that parent and student involvement in this process was minimal. The involvement of board members who are based in New Jersey has been also intermittent.

The mission statement is prominently displayed throughout the campus, but there is limited evidence that it has been used to guide any school-wide program development, nor has it been used in the nascent curriculum mapping project that will lead to a written curriculum. The administration reports that the review of the mission did raise questions about the school's identity, particularly with regard to the role of the Dutch language program in a school where forty-five percent of the students are either resident or expatriate Dutch speakers. However, none of these concepts have been articulated in written form.

In the accreditation process, the school did not differentiate between mission and vision. The team was unable to find any documentation indicating that there was school-wide agreement on what the school wishes to be in the future. Generic objectives for the school are listed in the recently adopted Policy Manual (Spring 2007), but there is little evidence that these objectives have been used to guide school operations. An effective school profile is current and in use. The school has kept parents informed about major accomplishments and changes.

Based on the above and information derived from other interviews, the team has concluded that forward thinking about where the school is going has, at best, been inconsistent and not coordinated on a school-community basis. The team believes this inconsistency is primarily the result of staff turn-over and the heavy time demands the maintenance of current programs places on faculty and administration. Many good ideas regarding needed changes and potential strategies were verbally expressed during interviews, but they have not been documented in writing, and follow-up has been minimal. This is consistent with reports from faculty that previous initiatives have either been changed or abandoned so that available resources would be directed

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to the latest concern and/or needs.

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

- The administration and faculty realize that there are numerous areas in which improvements are needed.
- During the accreditation process, substantive needs for the school were identified and preliminary potential strategies for addressing a portion of them were developed.

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

- Define and prioritize the needs of the school. By doing this the school will have a tool with which to develop a comprehensive development plan.
- Set priorities so that the school can better manage its change process and reduce or avoid the inconsistent nature of previous development efforts. It can focus on what is important rather than what is urgent.
- Involve staff in the process of continuous improvement. The time spent involving the staff more comprehensively and transparently in the development issues that affect their work will ultimately lead to better decisions, a more equitable division of responsibility, and increased “buy-in” to the process.

**Finding:** International School of Aruba has earned the overall assessment level of "Emerging" and has not 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 school has been owned and operated since 2005 by the prestigious instructional consortium, International Schools Services (ISS). In addition to their Aruban site, ISS owns two other international school entities and manages thirteen other locations in the Middle East, the Far East, Africa, and Latin America.

The relationship between ISS and the Aruban administration manifests cooperation and international educational leadership effectiveness. The leadership interactions are predicated upon mutual trust and identified common global objectives. The recognition and preservation of the execution, administration, and leadership prerogatives of the headmaster are completely in evidence.

The highest leadership at ISS provide consistent services, as the official board of directors' representatives systematically visit the campus three times per scholastic year and on a very frequent basis (at least one extended conference per week and intermittently with several brief weekly contacts) via effective verbal or e-mail interactions.

The uniquely dedicated, tenacious, and consistently optimistic headmaster is “stretched”

beyond normal leadership boundaries. He is consistently obligated to confront a myriad of professional and personal obligations which are profoundly convoluted. Many of these regular or periodic elements are expected to be satisfactorily delivered on an expedient basis, but with some degrees of frequency the headmaster is not provided with sufficient levels of “ammunition” to properly deliver the desired features. This includes insufficient administrative assistance to assist with the delegation of responsibilities as well as non-favorable and appropriate expenditure resources to produce the correctly envisioned optimum results. On occasions significant frustrations evolve due to these deficit components from the professionals who are still motivated to provide the students with the best of their pedagogical and extra-curricular skills. Thankfully, a significant majority of the instructors are able to rise above most of the less than optimal circumstances related to limited resources and other forms of funding and still deliver commendable levels of instruction and general support for the students and to protect the desired ideals of the institution.

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

- The school is spearheaded by experienced and highly seasoned international educators.
- There is a strong commitment to accreditation related continuous improvements and operational excellence.
- Peripheral and direct advantageous professional staff recruitment practices are in place.
- Highly ethical and integrity based values permeate the school.
- There is a current re-commitment to an annual summer professional development conference for high level administrators serving at sites at the various international posts.
- Highly competent financial assistance, which include rigorous scrutiny and best practices, is evident.
- An extremely diligent and tenacious headmaster provides leadership to the school.

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

- Ensure that the leadership in Princeton, New Jersey, and Aruba confront the realities associated with the current and short/moderate term enrollment levels which subsequently affect fiscal limitations and frequently unpopular encumbrances. These include some aspects of non-competitive salaries and benefits resulting in heavy staff turn-over, limited support resources, non-optimum campus spatial accommodations, pockets of ineffective faculty, administrative, and support staff alignments of assignments, and real and/or partially imagined negative perceptions.

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

## **Standard 3. Teaching and Learning**

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

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

Throughout the school, from Montessori (ages three through six) to grade twelve, the teachers and students engage enthusiastically in the teaching and learning process. A first step toward a fully articulated curriculum is evident through the current curriculum mapping. Classroom visits revealed a variety of methodology, considerable students' enthusiasm, and there was evidence of active, hands-on learning, as indicated by:

- Extensive after-school academic support program
- Affirmation by parents through meetings and surveys of higher standards
- Impressive college admissions record for graduating senior class
- Agreement by students that, under current administration and faculty, expectations have been raised and that students have been intellectually challenged
- Evidence of basic, but not extraordinary availability of materials and technology to support instructional programs
- ESL program that demonstrates an appreciation for diversity, and commitment to non-English speakers so they may become fully integrated into the English language program

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

- The high caliber, dedication, enthusiasm, and genuine commitment to student learning displayed by teachers and administration despite not always favorable resources support conditions, is a strength that is evident. In visiting classrooms, the team members observed that, despite the existing financial constraints, there are sufficient basic materials to support the core curriculum. There was further evidence of basic materials and facilities to support technology, a sufficient media center, a science lab, art (limited site) and music, and P.E.
- The administration has indicated its commitment to the development of a well-defined and articulated curriculum. Participation in workshops for this particular purpose is planned, as well as scheduled professional development within the forthcoming summer and next year's school calendar. Also evident are the variety and depth of programs that reach out to provide community service, such as the beach clean-up sponsored by the science department and the CAN-IT recycling project. These hands-on approach programs provide life-long positive social lessons that have ramifications that benefit the entire island of Aruba.

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

- Seek professional assistance in developing a Montessori through grade twelve curriculum that is horizontally and vertically aligned in all subjects. This document is fundamental to the stability and continuity of student learning.
- Establish an action plan that clearly defines time lines and expected outcomes in the development of a curriculum document articulating learning outcomes at all levels.
- Ensure that teaching teams meet in common planning times to promote collegial professional sharing within the elementary, middle school, and high school levels.

**Finding:** International School of Aruba 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:**

An essential element of teaching is assessment to ascertain learning outcomes. Several assessment instruments are in use, including, but not limited to, teacher generated tests, oral and written presentations, reports and projects, portfolio assessments, and standardized testing such as ITBS, PSAT, SAT, and AP exams. Currently ITBS exams are administered in the spring with results disseminated to parents and faculty before the end of the academic year. In interviews with teachers, the QART was unable to determine effective or comprehensive use of test results in systematic or meaningful strategies. It was further noted that the high faculty turnover rate does not lend itself to the continuous monitoring and follow-through of standardized test results.

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

- On an individual basis, the staff has established performance measures for student learning by using a variety of methods to drive instruction.
- Students' standardized test results are effectively communicated to parents and students.
- The after-school academic support program is widely used as a result of teacher assessment of student progress.

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

- Utilize standardized test results as an integral part of the planning and curricular development.
- Ensure that all teachers are provided with test results from the previous year to guide instruction and appropriate planning.
- Conduct a systematic analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness and use the results to improve student performance.
- Use student assessment data to drive decision-making for continuous improvement of student learning

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

## Standard 5. Resource and Support Systems

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

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

The school recruits and employs a qualified professional staff. The facilities are well maintained, providing a safe and orderly environment for students. A written security and crisis management plan exists, and it was indicated that the stakeholders have been trained in appropriate procedures. Appropriate support is provided by the ESL teacher for student assistance in acquiring the English language. The counselor/academic dean provides support for students with special needs, referrals, and limited career planning. Teachers provide extensive after-school support to student. Students have the option of participating in a limited array of after-school activities. The school monitors all financial transactions through a recognized, regularly audited accounting system.

In 2003, the International School of Aruba (ISA) experienced a major change in governance and ownership. Although the school has operated in a fiscally responsible manner since that time, the new building, fluctuating enrollment, and the possible change in Valero's future involvement in the school have resulted in financial negative concerns. These issues impact the budget and availability of funds for resource materials, appropriate staffing patterns and professional development.

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

- The teachers are qualified and demonstrate a love for teaching and their students.
- The students and parents indicated that they feel supported through the extensive after-school support program provided by the teachers.
- There is an impressive new campus site.

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

- Explore ways to provide increased funds in the budget for additional resource materials, staffing, and increased professional development.
- Provide additional support to oversee the implementation of a fully scoped and effective Continuous School Improvement Plan.
- Explore the creative acquisition of additional professional assistances.

**Finding:** International School of Aruba 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:**

Appropriate levels of communications with the stakeholders appear through a variety of channels. Parents are encouraged to communicate openly and freely with the school. Recent surveys and opinion surveys gave the students, parents, and faculty an opportunity to identify perceived strengths and areas for improvement. Staff orientation, student assemblies, and back-to-school-nights all help to outline, define, and communicate procedures and rules. Bon Dia, a daily publication, and the Breeze Courier, a weekly publication, communicate important news and events to the students, parents and teachers in the community. Student Council offers the students a forum for organizing special events and activities and the opportunity to ask questions or to make clarifications and recommendations to the teachers and administrators.

Semi-annual, parent-teacher conferences, mid-quarter and quarterly reports, presentations to the PTO and the Parent Advisory are avenues for keeping stakeholders informed about their student's performance and school effectiveness. Emails, telephone calls and formal and informal personal visits among parents, students, teachers, and administrators are encouraged to keep parents informed.

Students understand what is expected of them and expressed an appreciation to the teachers for their communications of support and praise. Honor rolls assemblies acknowledge students for their achievements and effort. National Honor and National Junior Honor societies recognize students for their academic, leadership, character, and community service accomplishments.

Communications between elementary teachers and secondary teachers and communications between teachers and administration are areas which require more comprehensive focus. Exploring and implementing communications networks to include more faculty input into decision-making process that affect them would help to bring together the elementary and secondary teachers and the teachers and administrators and to provide greater cohesion and buy-in by the teachers.

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

- The school is providing a variety of clear channels of communication among the school, the parents, and the students to keep them informed of rules, procedures, events, school performance.

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

- Explore and implement communications networks to include more faculty input and

clarification into decision-making processes. This would assist in meshing the entire elementary and secondary faculties and the administration.

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

## Standard 7. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

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

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

The school expresses a willingness and exhibits healthy preliminary stages of implementation and monitoring for a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.

For reasons described throughout certain components of this document, the school has had difficulty with establishing a full scoped school-wide planning process for continuous improvement. A commendable educational program has been developed primarily by individual teachers and the good will of the administration, but suffers from lack of coordination and inconsistency.

The accreditation process has generated many ideas with which to initiate long-range planning and a model with which to involve the community, particularly the full faculty and administration, in that process. It is firmly recommended that the establishment of this planning process be a priority. The process will be most useful if it is done in conjunction with the use of test data, budget development, and calendar formation.

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

- There is a commitment of faculty and administration to providing the highest quality program that resources will allow under frequent mitigating and counter productive circumstances.

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

- Develop a a long-range plan that can:
  1. Provide the school with a focus to facilitate school improvement;
  2. Help the school make optimum use of available resources;
  3. Facilitate the delegation of responsibility;
  4. Bring the community together around priority issues and needs;
  5. Provide an avenue for constructive debate on contentious issues;
  6. Reduce frustration regarding the pace of school improvement ;
  7. Provide increased opportunities for meaningful celebration of successes, and
  8. Provide substance with which to evaluate successes and update improvement efforts

**Finding:** International School of Aruba has earned the overall assessment level of "Emerging" and has not 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 Paul Sibley, 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

- Frank Anderson, Chair
- Anthony Horton, Team Member
- Judith Tostenrud, Team Member
- Martha Council, 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.