

What is District Accreditation?



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AdvancED District Accreditation is a powerful systems approach to improving student performance results and organizational effectiveness over time. District Accreditation recognizes that increasing student achievement involves more than improving instruction. It is a result of how well all the parts of the education system — the district, school, and classroom — work together to meet the needs of students.

What is the difference between District Accreditation and School Accreditation?

Accreditation has historically focused on individual schools. Most often, each school has determined whether it would engage in accreditation, which goals it would pursue, and what evidence would be used to determine success. Only recently has the district been perceived as a key leverage point for school improvement. Research now reveals that a school district is uniquely positioned to lead and support effective improvement of each of its schools.

Building on this research, AdvancED has developed an accreditation process specifically designed for school districts. The process invites school districts and their stakeholders to collaborate in reviewing the quality of the district's systems, the success of each individual school, and their collective contribution to student learning and overall district effectiveness.

What are the benefits of District Accreditation?

District Accreditation is not a stand-alone process; rather, it serves as an umbrella or framework that supports system-wide continuous improvement focused directly on improving learning for all students. School districts engaged in District Accreditation indicate that it is a highly effective process for meeting and exceeding federal and state accountability requirements. In addition, District Accreditation:

- Supports and enhances a **common language of school improvement** across content areas and grade levels, as well as across individual schools, feeder schools, and school district lines of responsibility.
- Ensures **continuity and collaboration in planning for improvement** anchored in a common vision for education among all of the district's schools and ensures that each school's improvement goals complement those of the school district.
- Provides the school district and community **with external review and recognition for improvement efforts** as well as recommendations from an external team of professionals that are designed to further the district's improvement efforts.
- Supports a **system-wide** approach to **achieving results**.
- Ensures **alignment and coordination** among all of the schools in the district.
- **Provides an internationally-recognized mark of quality** for the school district and its schools, students, teachers, and the community.

What constitutes a district?

For the purposes of AdvancED District Accreditation, a district may include school districts or systems, diocesan school systems, or tribal school coalitions that operate under a single governance structure.



Do all of a district's schools have to be accredited to be eligible?

All schools under the jurisdiction of the school district must either be accredited or enter into candidacy for accreditation. Once a successful Quality Assurance Review Visit has been conducted for the district, all of the schools and the school district will be accredited.

How does a district achieve District Accreditation?

District Accreditation requires commitment from the district's leadership and Board of Education. The school district must have in place or in development a quality continuous improvement planning process focused on improving student learning and commit to achieving and maintaining the following requirements:

- 1. Meet AdvancED standards.** The *AdvancED Accreditation Standards for Quality School Systems* are derived from educational research and best practice. They are centered on teaching and learning and encompass all aspects of a district. The standards require that schools have a clear vision and purpose; have effective and responsive leadership; have a rigorous curriculum taught through sound, research-based methods; collect, report, and use performance results; provide adequate resources and support for its educational programs; value and communicate with stakeholders; and have a commitment to continuously improve. They can be viewed and downloaded at www.advanc-ed.org.
- 2. Engage in a continuous process of improvement.** An accredited district is committed to being better today than it was yesterday. The district and all of its schools identify a shared vision, maintain a district-wide profile of the current reality, establish plans and assess the implementation of interventions, and document the results of their efforts to improve student learning and school/district effectiveness.
- 3. Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review.** Internal review involves district and school stakeholders. External review involves feedback from experienced educators from outside the district. In both cases, reviewers examine evidence to determine if the district and its schools are meeting the standards and achieving goals for improving student learning and school/district effectiveness.

What is used as a guide for districts to maintain accreditation?

The *AdvancED Accreditation Standards for Quality School Systems* serve as the foundation for the accreditation process. The seven standards and accompanying indicators are tied directly to research on factors that impact student learning. Accredited districts adhere to the standards and use them as a tool for ongoing self assessment. If you would like to learn more about AdvancED District Accreditation standards, they can be accessed at www.advanc-ed.org.

How long is the accreditation term?

The accreditation process is based on a five-year term accreditation. The process helps districts continuously improve by providing external checks, support, and feedback. Once every five years, the district hosts a Quality Assurance Review Team.



What is the purpose of a Quality Assurance Review?

The purpose of a Quality Assurance Review is to:

1. Determine the extent to which the district and its schools meet the AdvancED standards.
2. Assess the efficacy of the district's and its schools' improvement efforts.
3. Review the effectiveness of the district's and its schools' methods for quality assurance.
4. Provide high-quality feedback with clear recommendations and actionable next steps.
5. Make an accreditation recommendation.

How can I find out more about accreditation and begin the accreditation process for my school?

Visit www.advanc-ed.org for a step-by-step guide to initial accreditation, or contact your NCA CASI or SACS CASI State Office. A listing of state offices also is available on the AdvancED Web site.

About AdvancED

AdvancED is the parent organization for the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE). NCA CASI and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED and operate through state offices.

Dedicated to advancing excellence in education worldwide, AdvancED provides accreditation, research, and professional services to 23,000 public and private schools and 4,500 school districts in 30 states and 65 countries. AdvancED engages 18,000 volunteers and touches the lives of nearly 15 million students each year.

Visit www.advanc-ed.org to learn more about accreditation and AdvancED.

