

**Report of the  
Quality Assurance Review Team  
for  
Archimedean Upper Conservatory  
12425 SW 72nd St  
Miami, Florida, United States 33183-2513**

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***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) are accreditation divisions of AdvancED.***

**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 April 2006, 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 National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) came together to form one strong unified organization dedicated to education quality. That unified organization, known as AdvancED, creates the world's largest education community, representing 27,000 public and private schools and districts across the United States and in 65 countries worldwide and educating 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 and Policies for Quality Schools.** Schools demonstrate adherence to the AdvancED standards and policies 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 required actions to help the school improve. The team provides an oral exit report to the school and a written report detailing the team's required actions. The school acts on the team's required actions and submits a progress report 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 and policies.
2. Assess the efficacy of the school's improvement process and methods for quality assurance.
3. Identify commendations and required actions 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 required actions for improvement.

**Using the Report - Responding to the Required Actions.** The school uses the report to guide its improvement efforts. The school is held accountable for addressing the required actions identified in the report. The NCA CASI/SACS CASI State Office is available to assist schools in addressing the required actions. At prescribed intervals, the school must submit a progress report detailing the actions and progress the school has made on the team's required actions. The report is reviewed at the state and national level to ensure the school is addressing the required actions.

**Accreditation Recommendation.** The Quality Assurance Review Team uses the findings from the onsite visit to make an accreditation recommendation that is reviewed by the 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 SACS CASI Florida State Office (SACS-CASI-FL), a division of AdvancED, visited the Archimedean Upper Conservatory in Miami, Florida, United States on 04/23/2012 - 04/24/2012.

During the visit, members of the Quality Assurance Review Team interviewed 4 members of the administrative team, 20 students, 33 parents, and 14 teachers. 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:

1. Vision and Purpose
2. Governance and Leadership
3. Teaching and Learning
4. Documenting and Using Results
5. Resource and Support Systems
6. Stakeholder Communications and Relationships
7. 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 required actions.

### 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.

#### Commendation 1

Commendation Statement:

The leadership, faculty, and staff of Archimedean Upper Conservatory foster teamwork and dedication throughout the school community giving strong evidence of an educational environment that is deeply committed to its vision and its work.

Evidence:

Stakeholder opinions, ideas, and suggestions are valued, listened to, evaluated, and subsequently acted on.

Rationale:

The culture of teamwork, support, and camaraderie has resulted in a sharing of ideas, successes, and the promotion of student academic success.

## Commendation 2

### Commendation Statement:

Through the exceptional leadership of a committed and knowledgeable board, president, and director, the mission, vision, and purpose of Archimedean Upper Conservatory continue to be developed, promoted, implemented, monitored, and sustained over time.

### Evidence:

The board chair and director effectively articulate the school's vision and mission to students, teachers, parents, and community.

### Rationale:

Because of the clear articulation and effective leadership, all stakeholders understand the school's mission and its relationship to their respective roles and work collaboratively and collectively toward its fulfillment.

## Commendation 3

### Commendation Statement:

A caring and nurturing environment that supports the school's mission and addresses the needs of individual students in student-centered classroom settings is developed and sustained.

### Evidence:

The teaching staff adjusts instructional objectives, is aware of current performance levels, and articulates which strategies are being used to ensure learning and achievement.

### Rationale:

This focus has resulted in the school's receiving a top ranking based on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) data from the Florida Department of Education.

## Required Actions

In addition to the commendations, the Quality Assurance Review Team identified the following required actions for improvement. The team focused its required actions 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 addressing each of the required actions noted in this section. Following this review, the school will be asked to submit a progress report on these required actions.

### Required Action 1

#### Required Action:

Create a process to adopt and implement a comprehensive evaluation system to provide systematic professional growth of all personnel.

Evidence:

Although artifacts described an evaluation process, it was not evident that a comprehensive plan for evaluating personnel is being implemented in a systematic manner.

Rationale:

The absence of a formal performance system for evaluating personnel will not result in systematic feedback to teachers and other personnel as to the degree that school wide improvement priorities are being achieved.

## Required Action 2

Required Action:

Establish a professional development team comprised of teachers, administrators, and support staff whose primary responsibility is the creation, alignment, and implementation of a comprehensive professional development plan that is aligned with identified needs within the School Improvement Plan.

Evidence:

While the team noted that opportunities to participate in professional development activities are readily available, evidence was not found that the professional development activities offered support the instructional needs of teachers and the learning needs of students.

Rationale:

Establishing a team to create a comprehensive plan through which professional development is delivered to teachers will ensure that all planned professional development is aligned and focused, by way of an analysis of data, according to the instructional needs of teachers and learning needs of students.

**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 required actions made by the team. Include methods for monitoring progress toward the required actions.
4. Use the report to guide and strengthen the school's efforts to improve student performance and school effectiveness.
5. Following the Quality Assurance Review, submit the Accreditation Progress Report detailing progress made toward addressing the required actions. The report will be reviewed at the state and national level to ensure that significant progress is being made toward the required actions. 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.

## 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-FL accreditation seals are available at [www.advanced.org/communicationskit](http://www.advanced.org/communicationskit) for accredited schools and districts to post on their website and to use in school communications. Flags, door decals, diploma seals, and lapel pins are also available and can be ordered from the website to help you share your accomplishment with your community.

### **Summary**

The accreditation process engages the school in an ongoing journey of continuous improvement. The next steps in this journey are to build on the strengths and address the required actions 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.

# Review of AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools

The primary requirement for accreditation is that the Archimedean Upper Conservatory 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 president of the board and the board have been instrumental in setting the tone of the vision for the school. Based on the school's vision, policies and procedures that lay a foundation for collaboration and teamwork have been implemented. Beyond simply setting the framework for the implementation of the vision, the director and assistant director set the expectation for work effort and excellence by leading by example. This leadership style has allowed the school community to create an environment of caring and responsible educators who work collaboratively to support the school's mission to provide educational opportunities for students. The mission to "... kindle the young mind to the art of thinking," helping them become continuous learners who are proficient, responsible, and productive citizens, is evident and woven through every aspect of the Upper Conservatory.

A broad base of stakeholders understands the expectations of student learning as evidenced through their responses in interviews with the QAR team. Parents expressed their love for, and appreciation of, the effort teachers show to help their students develop a work ethic and a desire to be involved with the school community because of the school culture that has been created.

Using similar language, teachers spoke of their purpose for teaching. Their shared purpose focused on students becoming successful learners. Students also shared that while the expectations are high and the course curricula is challenging, the support from the school faculty and staff is ever present. They also articulated a desire to be challenged to succeed with an understanding that the impact on their own future is unlimited.

These shared perceptions and values are broadly discussed throughout the school's internal and external communities and have been articulated into a shared vision.

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

- The school has a clear and focused vision, mission, and purpose statement that have universal stakeholder support and buy-in.
- Communicating and supporting the school's vision and beliefs is creating a culture of commitment, ownership, and ambition.
- Fostering teamwork and dedication throughout the school community promotes the academic success of the students.

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

- Develop a strategic plan to address continued student population growth and improvement of facilities, while maintaining the collaboration and sense of "family" firmly embedded within the culture of the school.

**Finding:** Archimedean Upper Conservatory 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 preponderance of evidence verifies that the Archimedean Upper Conservatory (AUC) adopts written policies and procedures that promote the effective operation of the school. These policies and procedures include clearly defined lines of authority (as indicated on the school's organizational chart and by conversations), responsibilities, relationships, and accountability which support the vision, mission, and goals of the school. AUC is successful in meeting the governance and leadership standard which is due, in part, to its leaders who are advocates for the school's vision and improvement efforts.

The director, through the authority of the board, is ultimately responsible for the control, operation, organization, management, and administration of the schools. In order to facilitate the total and complete operation of the school, the board gives full reign to the director and the leadership team to implement policies and procedures without interference. The board president, the director, and leadership team, use documents such as the AUC policy handbook to establish parameters within which school leaders are permitted and encouraged to make decisions about how to accomplish established goals and objectives.

The governing body actively and effectively creates structures that support the school site in aligning external and internal systems with these goals. The results of this organizational pattern ensures stability in leadership, governance, and organizational structure to improve student learning.

The director, leadership team, and the board promote a collaborative culture of caring, relationships, encouragement, participation, responsibility, and ownership by maintaining clear channels of communication for staff and students. There is a commitment to professional development through teaching and learning teams and face-to-face meetings. Interviews with stakeholders, observations, and reviews of artifacts provided evidence of a system of governance that fosters a learning community throughout the school. Stakeholder interviews provided recurring positive comments regarding leadership and support from the Board of Directors for the work of teachers and administrators at the school level.

The school ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations by establishing and updating or revising policies to reflect the needs of the school and to give consideration to significant issues such as the reductions in state revenues that are requiring serious financial adjustments to be made during the school year.

As cited in appropriate artifacts and verified during interviews, board members receive orientation and training as statutorily required. They also receive trainings through the following means: Contractual services through professional organization that specializes in training stakeholders for the purpose of participating in all aspects of governance, attending professional conferences, internal workshops provided by the board president, AUC work sessions, one-on-one training sessions, and professional development opportunities associated with their job performance.

The Board acts as good stewards of the school's resources. The board requires legal and financial reports. Resources, to the extent possible, are deployed to adequately support the system's mission, vision, and goals for improving student learning. The board requires that adequate insurance be maintained to meet and protect its financial responsibilities and resources. The school meets the statutory amount of insurance, such as worker's compensation, commercial general liability, educator's practices liability, errors and omissions, unemployment, property/casualty, and bonds. The school builds public support, secures sufficient resources, and acts as stewards of resources for the system through the following: the many regulatory procedures, Miami-Dade County Government, Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO's), and School Advisory Councils,

The school employs a legal counsel and a board attorney who provides legal advice. The school leverages the specialized and diverse skills and talents of board members for specialized legal, financial, and other professional services.

The school uses a comprehensive assessment system for evaluating its effectiveness and its impact on student learning. The foundation of all assessments in Florida is the FCAT, which evaluates student mastery of the benchmarks, as reflected in the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS). Additionally, the school uses a variety of other performance indicators to make informed decisions for continuous improvement of student learning and school effectiveness. It reviews data from FCAT, promotion and retention reports, American College Test (ACT), Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT-10), Student Progress Monitoring, and other teacher-directed assessments.

The school's strategic plan provides a review and update of the use and responsiveness of its facilities' needs and operational resources.

The school creates and strengthens collaborative networks of community stakeholders to support student learning. The school engages a number of stakeholders which provides support of its programs. These groups range from parents, to civic-based organizations. They collaborate using various means such as forums, newsletters, web pages, planning teams, parent/teacher organizations, and emails.

The school provides direction and assistance in meeting organizational and student performance goals through venues such as professional developmental programs, workshops, faculty meetings, and individual conferences with the Director, who serves as the curriculum specialist .

AUC assesses and addresses community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction by school climate surveys, board meetings, district meetings, district-wide parent/teacher conferences, technological-based parent portals, and an array of relevant publications. Statements by the members of the board and the director revealed that they are informed about student growth and school data on a regular basis. A school report is provided at board meetings, and there is a quarterly review of student data at all levels of the organization. Schools monitor and evaluate student progress. These data are used to make decisions related to classroom application and to support student progress and growth.

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

- The leadership team actively and consciously incorporates the mission, vision, and core values to drive decision making and secure support from stakeholders.
- The director and board exhibit a supportive relationship.

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

- Implement the use of a formal, systematic, researched-based evaluation tool to assess school personnel annually.

**Finding:** Archimedean Upper Conservatory 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:**

The school has a rigorous curriculum derived from high standards and expectations which are research-based and aligned with the Sunshine State Standards, FCAT, the College Board and other examinations demonstrating knowledge and skills for the college bound student. This rigorous curriculum is evidenced by the use of standardized Advanced Placement (AP) curriculum, lesson plans, teacher-developed lessons and observations made by the QAR team.

The staff members and stakeholders participate in an ongoing process of reviewing the data from standardized examinations, including the SAT, PSAT, ACT, AP and FCAT, identifying strengths and weaknesses and then modifying the lessons to reflect the academic needs of each student.

The team, through observation, meetings with stakeholders, and empirical evidence, noted that students are actively engaged in the learning process within the classroom, and through academic competitions and internship opportunities.

Students are encouraged to engage in dialogue to explore higher-order thinking skills. This dialogue is most evident in the school's commitment to teaching a mandatory philosophy course each year. The intensive mathematics and the immersion of Greek, English, and science classes are examples of courses in which students are actively involved in higher-order thinking. The school provides a challenging curriculum and has an expectation of high achievement from all its students. Students who are having difficulty reaching their potential are given additional instructional support from the teachers and administration. Students have been identified through their Individualized Education Plan (IEP), teacher observation, psychological testing, and parent/student concern.

Students with differing learning needs are fully integrated and mainstreamed in all classrooms. Intensive reading is available to students who do not achieve a passing score on the FCAT in the area of reading. Students have peer support and the expectation is for parents to be a full participant in their child's

education.

The school climate fosters a sense of celebration of diverse culture, languages, and backgrounds. The school respects and promotes higher order thinking and an appreciation of learning and knowing different cultures as part of one's education.

School leaders base all of their decisions about the allocation of instructional time on student achievement data, policy compliance, and related research. This is evidenced by after-school study time and additional study and instructional time on Saturdays.

The school's vision is for a K-12 program where students learn mathematics, Greek, and philosophy in progression. The flow of learning across grades and schools is evident through decisions made by stakeholders and the vision of the school.

Teachers reportedly use pre-assessment as a basis for differentiation of instruction. This practice is evidenced in their lesson plans and the reteaching of students.

The interaction of administration with students is caring, responsive, supportive, and respectful. Teachers create an environment where students feel safe and confident. Staff members and students feel they are contributing to the success of the school. This is evidenced through parent, teacher, student surveys, student work displayed, and positive interactions among students, and between students and adults.

Teachers, administration, and parents have shared behavioral expectations and routines that reflect the school wide goals for safety and orderliness.

The principal grants teachers complete flexibility and support to determine the materials needed for their classroom. Teachers report that administration is very supportive of their needs.

Much attention is given to technology. State-of-the-art computers and additional technology are used in the classroom. Technology is integrated into all aspects of the curriculum and assessment. This is evidenced by technology resources, media services, and the number of staff members proficient with advanced technology.

The school provides the students with many opportunities throughout the year to participate in competitions related to their courses of study. Examples include: Model United Nations, Science Olympiad and the Miami-Dade Geography Bee.

The school is actively engaged in the community and students are given the opportunity to apply their learning in internships. Examples include: marine conservation and a summer program teaching English in Greece.

Members of the instructional staff consistently evaluate and monitor student learning through formative and teacher-made assessments that are aligned with the standards and expectations. Teachers continuously analyze the data to determine the strengths and weaknesses of each student and modify the lesson plans as needed to cover academic areas which may be low. Teachers make themselves available to students to work on individual concerns during lunch, after school, email, and on Saturday mornings.

The school stresses the importance of teachers needing to reteach areas in curriculum where students are weak. Teachers encourage peer learning and the administration encourages teachers to find a variety of ways to meet student needs. The QAR team observed and learned through dialogue that teachers are in

need of learning a variety of instructional methods to meet their goals.

Teachers are given autonomy to determine the needs of their students in order to meet standards on the examination. Teachers are valued as experts in knowledge in their field. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate with one another to determine methods of differentiated instruction by consulting about individual learning styles. The QAR did not observe evidence of teachers addressing the needs of different learning styles. Teachers commented that they look for different ways to reteach but could not specify strategies when asked by the QAR team.

Teachers prioritize essential content as material which will be tested on FCAT, SAT, and ACT exams. Teachers review essential content on a regular basis and in study sessions which take place outside of the scheduled class time.

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

- The school analyzes data to determine academic strengths and weaknesses and provides this feedback to the teachers.
- Encouraging, knowledgeable, and caring teachers provide enrichment opportunities through local, state, and national competitions.
- The school provides a challenging curriculum for all students.

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

- Develop a plan for professional development to provide teachers a variety of instructional methods to meet individual learning needs.

**Finding:** Archimedean Upper Conservatory 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:**

The AUC enacts comprehensive system monitors and documents student performance and uses these results to develop strategies to improve student achievement and school effectiveness. The school has a wealth of assessment data from standardized measurements available to stakeholders, primarily through the system's expansive informational technology system. These data are customized in various platforms such as the school wide data management/data mining system, FACT STAR, and the school applies the same scrutiny of continuous improvement to its governance, support, and administrative functions as to its core mission of student learning.

The school's assessment provides administrators and appropriate staff access to disaggregated data. Administrators, and teachers utilize this source to develop and maintain "data notebooks" for their school and use the customized information to drive the instructional program. Through interviews, observations,

and reviews of artifacts, the QAR team did not find consistent proof that the use of formative assessments are being fully utilized at the classroom level to modify and adjust instruction.

The school uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly defined student performance measures. Students are assessed using multiple platforms and formats that yield valid and reliable results. Data are collected at various levels and at appropriate intervals, guided by a detailed testing calendar. Baseline data are collected for reading, mathematics, and science at the beginning of the school year. Mid-year data are collected and compared to the baseline data. Students in grades 9-12 are assessed using one of the following assessment/evaluative tools:

- A robust offering of AP courses and corresponding AP Examinations, particularly in mathematics: AP Calculus AB, AP Calculus BC, and AP Statistics.
- FCAT
- Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading (FAIR)
- Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT 2.0)
- End of Course Examinations (EOCs)
- Florida Alternate Assessment (FAA)

Additionally, according to Florida Accountability Reports, the school is ranked as the top high school in Miami-Dade and the second-ranked school in Florida. Other documents verify that that AUC is an "A" school, one of only six schools in Miami-Dade to meet 100% of all 39 Adequate Yearly Progress criteria and one of two schools in the district to meet this goal for three consecutive years.

Other school functions, such as: Human Resource Services, Finance and Business Services, and Operations, make use of data to improve organizational effectiveness of the delivery of services in support of student performance. The current school management system is used to maintain and secure accurate and complete student records.

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

- The director is very knowledgeable of, and analyzes data, often leading the discussion and setting expectation by using student performance data to drive curricular, instructional, and professional development decision making.
- Comprehensive student assessment data are available for the purpose of school improvement planning.
- The school implements a systematic data-driven process to guide performance conversations and instructional decisions for improving student achievement.

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

- Refine and focus the implementation of formative assessments.
- Provide training for instructional staff on using student assessment data regularly to make decisions for continuous improvement of teaching and learning for the benefit of improving student achievement.

**Finding:** Archimedean Upper Conservatory 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:**

AUC recruits, employs, and mentors qualified a professional staff that is capable of fulfilling assigned roles and responsibilities. The school employs 23 full- and part-time teachers. Seventy-eight percent of teachers hold two or more degrees at the bachelor's level or higher, 61% have earned graduate degrees, including nine master's, three doctoral, and two professional degrees. Teachers are recruited locally, nationally, and internationally in order to attract the most qualified personnel. The Greek Ministry of Education supports the school by contributing a number of exchange teachers, which is over and above the basic allocation.

According to Florida Accountability Report's literature, teachers are highly qualified and certified within the state of Florida. The average teaching experience is greater than nine years of teaching experience.

The school assigns professional staff responsibilities based on their qualifications. Based on the interviews, teachers are assigned based on subject area certifications. The director assumes a leadership role in the school's overall development, implementation of the content areas, and leveraging of the following academic services: counseling, professional development, college and career advisement, personal counseling, and conferencing.

Professional development emerges as an ongoing process at AUC. Teachers meet weekly to discuss their performance with directors in grade-level meetings and monthly general meetings. Teachers engage in professional learning communities to share current research among each other. The director, with the help of the assistant director, provides professional development for staff and provides information regarding websites for additional opportunities. However, the QAR team did not find evidence of an aligned professional development process. Additionally, a formal evaluation system for teachers was not evident. Through interviews and a review of artifacts, it was clearly evident that teacher conferences are held during and at the end of the year to discuss progress which is linked to student achievement. Teachers collaborate with management to determine goals for the school year. AUC allows teachers to continue their education through tuition assistance for professional development courses, additional certifications, and higher-level degrees.

Archimedean Upper Conservatory provides and assigns sufficient staff to meet the vision and purpose of the school. Through interviews with all stakeholder groups, there was an expression of a belief and expectation that "students will emerge as confident leaders in the 21st century global community through a holistic approach of rigorous academic standards, a commitment to individualized learning paths, and attention to the growth of each student as a civic-minded contributor both within local communities and beyond." The school has effectively designed teacher schedules which allow for the assignment of staff to needed areas well beyond the classroom. The school has student advisors, learning coaches, peer mentors, academic advisors, family success liaisons, club sponsors, directors, lead instructional coaches, chairs, team captains, and a host of other positions to ensure an adequate number of staff members to service the student population. The mission of the school, "... kindling the art of teaching through teaching of advanced mathematics and the Greek language," promotes an educational experience for all students by

incorporating school and community/family partnerships, coupled with a rigorous curriculum within a data-driven and student-centered instructional model. "Student success will be measured by valid and reliable assessment data, parent and student satisfaction, and continued growth within the academic community," was a live statement indicated in the interviews. The school stresses individualized learning plans and work with parents as teacher coaches to ensure collaboration. Data are the driving force for decision making within the school community. Students are tested by a variety of mechanisms such as End of Course examinations (EOCs), course examinations, progress reports, and other benchmark tools to monitor and track the matriculation of the student population.

AUC provides the necessary resources to support its educational programs and implement its plan for improvement. The school remains open after school and on weekends to provide internet access in the context of the rigorous curriculum with readily available teacher support. Students are provided laptops to complete their studies. The school also provides books and laboratory materials and pays shipping costs for these materials. In addition to the professional staff, the school employs support staff for maintenance, informational technology, and administrative services.

The school monitors all financial transactions through a recognized regularly audited system by undergoing an independent audit which is mandated by charter school level. AUC is a public institution and, therefore, is subject to continued monitoring by appropriate staff at the school district level.

The school has safeguards in place to protect student identities and student information. The school has a content management system that electronically houses information and physical files are also kept by the Miami-Dade County Public Schools System. Additionally, the school is held accountable by Miami-Dade Government for all regulations regarding occupancy, fire and health codes, and land use.

The school has implemented a crisis management plan; however, students were not readily able to express the details of the plan. The school has implemented several safeguards to ensure that students have guidance services. The school has family support resources and other tools to help students matriculate through the program. The school has special needs programs for those students with learning disabilities, including psychological services, related services, and dedicated administrators and teachers.

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

- The school provides opportunities for students to make use of the facilities and technology after school and weekends.
- Teachers are available to students in many relevant activities in support of the robust, rigorous course offerings and the many co-curriculum activities.

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

- Publicize and review the crisis management plan on a quarterly basis, providing details of required actions, for each role stakeholder group.

**Finding:** Archimedean Upper Conservatory has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

## Standard 6: Stakeholder Communications and Relationships

**Standard:** The school fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

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

The school fosters effective communication and relationships with and among its stakeholders to support student learning. The school has developed relationships with several entities including the Florida International University (FIU), the Greek Government, and Montclair University. The school has use of local libraries, museums, and other centers to enrich the learning process for students and to hold meet-and-greet events in various locations around the community. The school partners with local, regional, and national co-curriculum organizations, such as State Science Olympiad, Geography Bee, Greek Language Diploma, Manatee Oceanography, Florida High School Model United Nations, and South Florida Regional Science Fair, in an effort to offer rigorous, competitive extracurricular opportunities for its students. The school also has a strong inter community presence among its parents. The school has developed parent booster clubs that meet after school and on weekends. Additionally, the board president, the director, and the assistant director teach several courses on a regular basis.

AUC has several channels for students to listen and communicate with its stakeholders. The school has a "suggestion box", a virtual avenue for its stakeholders to communicate with the school. The director and teachers also have open offices for the students to attend and discuss issues. The school communicates with its stakeholders by email, an internal intranet system, newsletters, the website, and EDUSOFT. Surveys are frequently used as a "communicate link" for stakeholders to share concerns or positive feedback.

The school solicits knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance the work of the school through the Educational Excellence School Advisory Council (EESAC), Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), and leadership groups among its stakeholders. These organizations also provide leadership opportunities for staff, students, and parents. While the school is a public charter, the QAR team noted that the student body and faculty do not reflect rich diversity in any substantial numbers.

AUC communicates expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to all stakeholders. The School Improvement Plan serves as a living document to guide the school. Evidence of the school's commitment to improvement was noted in the administration's decision to hire additional teachers with strong backgrounds. During the parent interviews, parents substantiated that clear expectations are set at the time of enrollment and throughout the school year in various forms. Students are also provided with a syllabus for each course that clearly states course goals and objectives.

The school provides information about students, their performance, and school effectiveness that is meaningful and useful to stakeholders. The school publishes its outstanding accountability results to the Florida Department of Education and, on a regular basis, publishes the information on its website during the school year.

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

- The school has created a strong network of support among its stakeholders.
- The board president and the administrators teach classes.
- The school has developed and implemented a comprehensive, effective, and efficient

- communication process with all stakeholder groups.
- The small school community unites around a common pursuit of excellence in academic achievement.

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

- Adopt a process to identify, recruit, and enroll a more diverse student body.

**Finding:** Archimedean Upper Conservatory 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:**

The school establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance as evidenced in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) central process. The QAR team noted the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence. The school's SIP is aligned with state and district improvement goals. The school implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement involving faculty, EESAC and community stakeholder groups. The SIP includes specific strategies identified through the deliberation of these entities through the use of performance data from FCAT, FAIR, PSAT/SAT, and Advanced Placement (AP) exams are aligned with stated goals. Stakeholders work together to align most functions of the school with the school's vision and the high academic expectations for student learning. Interviews indicated that the strategies are revisited throughout the school year as a means of assessing improvement formatively. Strategic adjustments are made if a need is determined.

The continuous improvement process is clearly aligned with the current school mission, indicating what the school will do to prepare students and allowing for a unified focus for improvement efforts. Implementation, monitoring, and evaluation are based on data analysis focusing on the academic achievement of the students through a unique bilingual curriculum integrating the, "depth of the a Greek curriculum and breadth of the American curriculum."

Results of improvement efforts and student achievement are clearly and continuously communicated through various means, including individual student grade reports, mass emails, a powerful and comprehensive web-based management system, affectionately named "Archie," the school's website, and the school profile. Faculty, students, and parents indicated they are aware of the achievements of individual students and the school as a whole.

The staff is presented with some professional development opportunities made available to them through a variety of means. Professional development opportunities do exist for certified and classified personnel through district offerings and outside agencies. However, a clear, focused, and site-based professional development plan is not evident.

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

- Based on the results of interviews, the director systematically leads discussions with the faculty and students concerning school improvement priorities.

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

- Develop and implement a focused and aligned site-based professional development plan.

**Finding:** Archimedean Upper Conservatory has earned the overall assessment level of "Operational" and has met this standard for accreditation.

## Conclusion

The commendations and required actions 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 required actions 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 required actions for improvement that the school will need to address. Following this review, the school will be required to submit a progress report summarizing its progress toward addressing the team's required actions.

The Quality Assurance Review Team expresses appreciation to the School Administration, 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-FL accreditation with AdvancED.

# Appendix

## Quality Assurance Review Team Members

- Dr. George M. Koonce Jr., Chair/Lead Evaluator (Dr. George Koonce & Associates)
- Dr. Wendy H. Weiner, Team Member (Conservatory Prep Senior High School)
- Mr. Scott H. Sentgeorge, Team Member (The King's Academy)
- Dr. Amy Falvey, Team Member (Oslo Middle School)

## 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.