

North Central Association  
Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement

**Report of the Visit of the  
NCA CASI Team**

To  
W. T. Sampson Unit School  
PSC 1005 Box 49  
FPO AE 09593

on  
February 14 – 17, 2006

Submitted to  
Frank W. Simone, Principal

on  
March 20, 2006

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The views, opinions, and findings contained in this report are those of the authors and should not be construed as an official Department of Defense position, policy, or decision unless so designated by other official documentation.

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## **PREFACE**

This school was evaluated using the NCA CASI/DoDEA school improvement process as the primary basis for team observations and comment. The NCA CASI representatives visited with representatives of the military community and conducted the NCA CASI standards compliance review. The full team spent three days in the school. During this time the team met with the school improvement team, parents, and students; visited classes; examined the learning climate; and consulted with teachers both individually and in group meetings. A conference with the administration and an exit report with the staff took place at the conclusion of the visit.

This report summarizes the extensive discussions that took place with teachers, administrators, students, parents, and members of the school improvement team during the visit. The comments and suggestions shared with the school community during these sessions will provide the leadership with information and guidance as the school begins the school improvement plan revisions.

This team was augmented by Ed Drozdowski from West Point Elementary School, Dr. Carmen Arroyo from DDESS Puerto Rico District, and Virginia Tompkins from Quantico Middle/High School. These three people provided valuable insights into the DoDEA schools and assisted in a meaningful way to the visit to this school. The team thanks the administration, teachers, students, parents, and support staff of W. T. Sampson Unit School for their hospitality and warm welcome. A special thanks to the parents and staff who provided the food in our workroom.

## TEAM ROSTER

**Chairperson:** Ms. Cher Tufly  
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Quantico, VA 22134

**SECTION I  
GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL  
W.T. SAMPSON UNIT SCHOOL**

Principal: Frank Simone  
 Principal's Tenure in the School: 1.5 years  
 Principal's E-mail Address: frank.simone@am.dodea.edu  
 Assistant Principal: John Gilbo  
 Grades: Pre-K - 12  
 Total Enrollment: 340

	<u>Enrollment Per Grade</u>	<u>Sections Per Grade</u>
Pre-Kindergarten	36	2
Kindergarten	29	2
Grade 1	30	2
Grade 2	26	2
Grade 3	26	2
Grade 4	32	2
Grade 5	32	2
Grade 6	23	1
Grade 7	25	
Grade 8	19	
Grade 9	20	
Grade 10	21	
Grade 11	12	
Grade 12	9	

Professional Staff: 47  
 FTE of Professional Staff: 45.5  
 Number of Staff New This Year: 8

**Setting**

The community of Guantanamo Bay (GTMO), Cuba, is very unique in many ways. Located on the island of Cuba, it gets very little rain as the surrounding mountains keep the rain clouds out of the area. GTMO has a desert-like landscape with lots of cactus, palm and banyan trees, mango trees, flowering bushes, and other types of unique vegetation. Because of its location, getting to and from Guantanamo Bay is somewhat difficult. Since January 2002, the base has gone from relative obscurity to being in charge of Taliban and Al-Qaeda detainees.

The school is considered a unit school; however, in reality, it is an elementary school campus and a middle school/high school campus that are approximately two miles apart. The school has a rich history. It is the oldest overseas school, established in 1939, and the only DoDDS school located on

Communist soil. It became a DoDDS (overseas) school in 1966, but it is now aligned with the DDESS (domestic) schools. It is the only DoDDS school that belongs neither to Europe or the Pacific.

### **Students**

There are 340 students representing grades pre-K through 12. The majority are children of US Naval personnel; US Coastguard, Army, Marine, and civilian families are also represented. The student population is 54% white, with Hispanics and Blacks being the next largest groups; American Indians, Pacific Islanders, and Asians represent the remaining population of the students.

### **Program**

The programs offered to students are regular classrooms pre-kindergarten through high school, host nation, special services, gifted education, and computers. In addition, the services of a counselor, psychologist, and a nurse are available to students.

Students participate in extra-curricular activities including drama, chess, student council, sports, library club, computer club, Odyssey of the Mind, and after school tutorials. A number of after school activities support the goals of the school improvement plan.

### **Staffing and Organization**

There are 44 regular classroom teachers. Other professional staff assigned to the school number 14, including 4 clerical, 8 paraprofessionals, and 2 administrators. Seventy-one percent of the professional staff has a master's degree and 9% has completed a doctoral degree. Eleven percent of the faculty has been teaching one to five years; 11% have been teaching 6-10 years, 20% from 11 to 20 years; 58% for more than 20 years. The school has experienced rapid turnover in staff in recent years. Approximately two-thirds of both the elementary and secondary teachers are new in the last two years. All clerical staff, all but one of the paraprofessionals, and both administrators are new in the last two years.

This unit school is divided into two separate locations with Pre-K-6 students located in one facility and 7-12 students in another facility approximately two miles away. Both buildings have gymnasium, health, computer, library, counseling, and administrative facilities

### **School Environment**

There is a warm and welcoming, child-centered environment at the school. The staff works well together on both a formal and informal basis to ensure vertical and horizontal articulation. The small school environment allows staff and administration to know the children personally and to meet the individual needs of each child. Students were polite and respectful and were enthusiastic about their school, teachers, and educational opportunities.

The school plant is well maintained and clean. There are numerous examples of student work displayed throughout the building. Parents and other volunteers are visible in the buildings. A beneficial relationship exists between the school and staff with parent organizations and base services. The playgrounds at the elementary building offered a spacious and well equipped play area.

## **SECTION II DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

### **Overview**

The school has an adopted mission statement and has established a school improvement leadership team. Due to transfers, the entire school improvement leadership team (SILT) was new in the 2004 – 2005 school year. The previous team had begun a data gathering process and had established general goal areas but had not completed any of the other tasks. It did not appear that the school had been engaged in a formal and continuous school improvement process prior to the 2004-05 school year.

Beginning in December of 2004, the SILT analyzed the data further, refined the goals, completed a profile, triangulated the data, established goal committees, developed a preliminary school improvement plan, arranged initial staff development activities, and is in the first year of implementation. The SILT chair has completed training in the school improvement process and has shared his knowledge with the rest of the leadership team.

During the last 18 months the district and the area service center have provided excellent support to the school as it engaged in the school improvement process. The administration and SILT members have provided enthusiastic leadership for the entire faculty.

The faculty selected two goals for their current school improvement efforts. The goals included:

1. All students will improve their reading comprehension across the curriculum.
2. All students will increase their ability to solve problems across the curriculum.

### **Involvement in the School Improvement Process**

#### **Findings**

- Parents and students were involved throughout the school improvement process. The SILT made arrangements to ensure succession when students and parents PCSd.
- Shared leadership in the school improvement process was evident. Leadership involved both administration and the staff.
- All faculty members were involved in the process either through the SILT or a goal committee.
- The team observed evidence of broad staff involvement and participation in the implementation of the interventions in the classroom.

#### **Next Steps**

- Involvement of non-certified staff (secretaries, teaching aides, and technology support staff) in the school improvement process in both planning and implementation should be considered.

- While the staff members have made a number of efforts to involve the parents and community in the school improvement process, they should continue to seek additional strategies to increase the levels of this involvement.
- Due to high staff mobility, methods should be developed to ensure that the entire staff is involved in the continued refinement of the school improvement plan including the development of local assessments and progress toward attainment of the goals.

## **Leadership for the School Improvement Process**

### **Findings**

- Due to the mobility of the staff, the entire SILT team and the administrative leadership were new in 2004 – 2005.
- Both administrators and staff leaders immediately engaged in the school improvement process, despite the inconsistency of previous efforts and lack of prior implementation.
- The team observed evidence of positive and enthusiastic leadership at all levels of the school.
- The leadership team organized the data and information, confirmed that the goals were supported by the data, and refined the essence of the goals before developing the school improvement plan.
- Professional development for the 2005 – 2006 school year was planned to support the interventions selected by the goal committees.
- Student involvement in supporting the school improvement process was evident in student projects; examples include the newspaper and Big 6 flyer.

### **Next Steps**

- Recruit leadership team members who will potentially provide continuity to the school improvement process throughout the cycle of the plan.
- Create a committee(s) responsible for the collection, analysis, disaggregation, and monitoring of data for both formative and summative assessment results.
- Standardized assessments have been defined for each goal; however, further development is needed for local and classroom assessments to monitor both implementation of interventions and student progress.

## **High Expectations for School Improvement**

### **Findings**

- The mission, the goals, and support for the planning of interventions were apparent in virtually every classroom.
- Classroom observations and conversations with students indicated that the students were aware of the mission and goals and could identify the strategies that were being implemented to achieve the goals.

- Implementation of the interventions related to the problem solving goal was clearly observed by the team.
- The team observed evidence of cooperative and group learning activities.
- Extensive evidence existed that graphic organizers had been implemented throughout the school. This was evident in posted materials, lesson plans, and student work.
- The team observed some evidence of implementation of SQ3R in elementary classrooms; however, implementation of the reading strategies was less evident at the secondary level.
- High levels of student engagement were observed throughout the school.

### **Next Steps**

- Assessments to monitor student progress within the local curriculum need to be developed.
- The action plan needs to include methods to monitor the implementation of the interventions.
- The action plan needs to define how ongoing student progress will be monitored and evaluated.
- The action plan needs further refinement to allow new staff members to clearly understand the expectations and interventions associated with the school improvement process.
- The SILT should consider the use of additional performance measures that are currently available such as PSAT and end of course test results.
- Disaggregation of the assessment results needs to be pursued to identify subgroups that may need additional interventions.
- An “End of Year Status Report” would be invaluable in ensuring continuity of the school improvement process as the staff changes over time and would build on the organizational processes already implemented by the SILT.

## **School Culture and Climate in Support of School Improvement**

### **Findings**

- The team observed ample evidence among both staff and students of enthusiasm in the school and engagement in the teaching-learning process.
- A clear process (chain of concern) is in place for all stakeholders to voice concerns.
- Parents indicated knowledge of the school goals and acknowledged evidence of improvement in the goal areas.
- Parents indicated that school-parent communications had been strengthened in the last two years.
- An atmosphere of respect and support was evident between teachers and students.
- Extra-curricular activities that support the goals of the school improvement plan have been developed.
- Individual interaction, student support of each other’s accomplishments, and low absenteeism are indicators of a positive school environment.

### **Next Steps**

- Continue to seek additional methods of communicating with the parents and community.

## **SECTION III GENERAL APPRAISAL**

### **Next Steps for School Improvement**

#### **Findings**

- The team observed evidence of broad staff involvement and participation in the implementation of the interventions in the classroom.
- The team observed evidence of positive and enthusiastic leadership at all levels of the schools.
- Classroom observations and conversations with students indicated that the students were aware of the mission and goals and could identify the strategies that were being implemented to achieve the goals.
- The team observed ample evidence among both staff and students of enthusiasm and engagement in teaching-learning process.

#### **Next Steps**

- Develop processes and methods that will provide continuity in the school improvement process as staff continues to change over time.
- Disaggregate assessment data to determine which student subgroups may need additional interventions.
- Refine the action plan to further define local assessments, staff development plans, and monitoring of student progress.

#### **DoDEA Instructional Quality**

- The team observed a variety of opportunities for students to achieve success in learning, e.g., cooperative groups were used in many rooms, peer assistance was systematically used in classrooms, and individualized instruction was observed.
- The team observed a wide variety of teaching and learning strategies that focused on active student involvement in the learning process, e.g., reading aloud, project presentations, white board work, and manipulatives.
- Teachers were observed accommodating individual student learning styles.
- There was clear evidence that school and classroom routines are well established.
- A high level of student engagement, attention to task, and student enthusiasm were observed indicators of a focused learning environment.
- Technology is available through out all classrooms to support instruction.

#### **DoDEA Curricular Standards**

- DoDEA curricular standards are followed and integrated throughout the subject areas.
- Through interviews with the administrative team and teaching staff evidence was found that curricular standards are discussed at staff meetings and are utilized to guide instruction.
- Teachers use the standards during parent-teacher conferences to describe and clarify student progress.

## **DoDEA Initiatives**

- The DSO supports the DoDEA initiatives with human and instructional material resources.
- There is observable evidence that DoDEA Reads and Math Matters have been implemented at the school.
- The DoDEA initiative of one computer for every two students is implemented.
- The early childhood program, Sure Start, utilizes the Creative Curriculum; the kindergarten is a full-day program, and PSCD is fully implemented.
- The pre-school program has been appropriately integrated into the school improvement process.
- Displays of student work in the halls and in most classrooms are supporting evidence of the implementation of the DoDEA initiatives.
- There is evidence that the DoDEA high school initiative has been implemented.

## **Other Characteristics**

- The unique setting of the school on the Guantanamo Bay Naval Air Station allows the school the opportunity to provide a unifying influence in the total community.
- The small size of the school allows every teacher to know every child by name and to support each child's emotional, social, and educational needs.
- The administrative team supplies leadership for the school improvement plan and instructional program.
- The base commander provides positive support for the school and is readily accessible to the administrative team.
- The classrooms and hallways clearly share the "celebration of learning" that occurs daily in this school through the numerous displays of activities and student work.
- Parents volunteer at the school on a regular basis.
- The community views the teaching staff as caring, child oriented, and proactive in identifying uniqueness in all students.
- The school communicates with parents utilizing newsletters, telephone calls, conferences, progress reports, and informal contacts with parents. The school may want to consider expanding the communication via e-mail and gathering feedback concerning the effectiveness of other modes of communication.
- A well designed website has been constructed by the school to facilitate communication about the school and the improvement plan.
- The two facilities, both elementary and middle/high school, are spacious, well maintained, well supplied, and clean; however, separating programs from the unit school concept to two stand alone schools, elementary and secondary, may be desirable in an effort to clarify lines of communication, school improvement, and staff development issues.
- Parents support investigating ways to include a formal lunch program at the secondary school.

- There are multiple after-school activities for students provided through the school extra-curricular programs. Parents and students report a desire to investigate opportunities for off-island competition.
- Good students are recognized in a variety of ways, to include the Super Shark Award at the elementary level and the Renaissance Program at the secondary level.

### **Team Recommendation**

The visiting team is pleased to notify the Department of Defense State Committee that W. T. Sampson Unit School has met the NCA CASI requirements regarding school improvement.

## **Limitations on the Distribution, Use, and Scope of This Document**

It is the official intent of the Board of Trustees of the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement that this report on the evaluation of the school be considered a privileged document, to be submitted directly to the administration of the school. The distribution of the report and its availability for public consideration beyond that point rest solely in the hands of those administrators. Neither the chairperson nor the other members of the evaluation team are authorized to release any of the information contained in this report without the express approval of the administration of the school.

The primary purpose of the evaluation team has been to examine the educational setting of the school, including courses of study, learning materials, student needs and interests, staffing, and facilities. A particular focus of the team has been to evaluate the development and implementation of the DoDEA/NCA SIP.

It has not been the purpose of the visiting team to evaluate individual members of the school staff. The use of this report as an official assessment of any staff person's professional competency would be in violation of the process and the intent under which the school evaluation was conducted. Such use would be inherently invalid since at no time during the team visit has the team been concerned with the evaluation of individual staff member performance.

Additionally, it has not been the purpose of the visiting team to prescribe a specific company's instructional materials or programs. The team has attempted to evaluate the school's learning materials in light of the needs of the students being served and the relationship of the materials to the goals and objectives of the school. Any references to specific instructional materials contained in the team report are merely for consideration by the school. The school staff exercises the responsibility of selecting learning materials appropriate for the learners.

The members of the evaluation team have utilized their best professional judgment in drawing the conclusions reported in this document. The team members are not to be held accountable for any injudicious or unauthorized use of this document.

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North Central Association