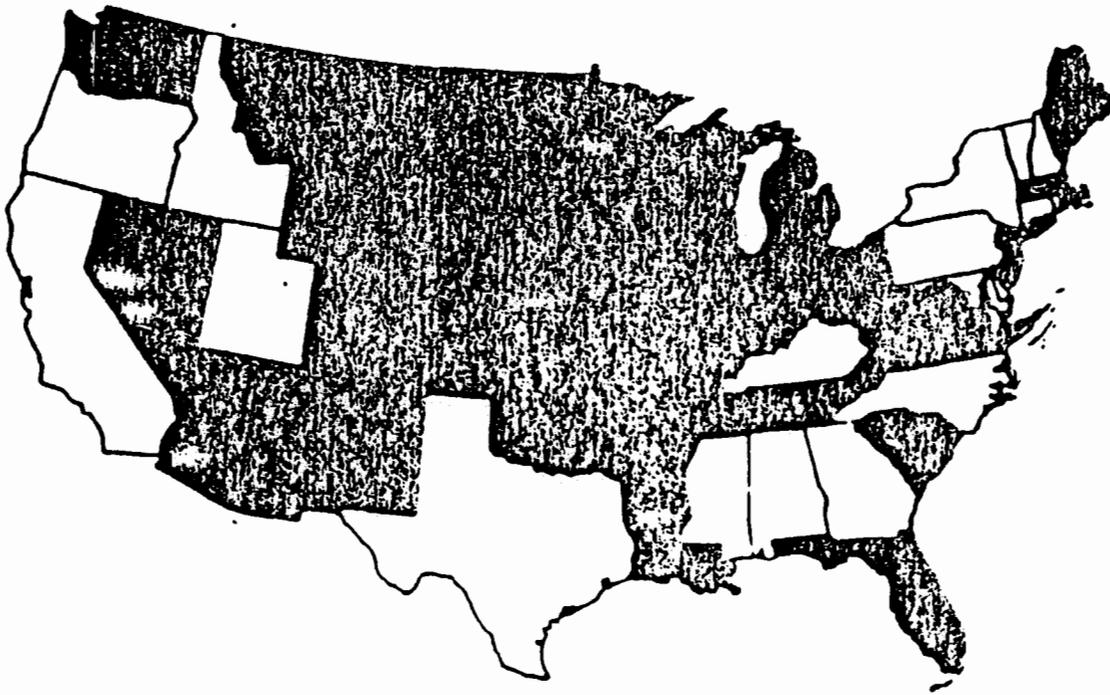# North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Michigan Committee

State Office:

The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
State Director: Dr. William Bushaw

Regional Office:

Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant
Assoc. State Director: Dr. Robert Mills

Outcomes Accreditation (OA)

The North Central Association's Outcomes Accreditation (OA) model has generated considerable interest among Michigan educators. It is a process that follows many of the principles of the "Effective Schools Research" and results in schools focusing their activities on improving student success. But as with any new initiative, certain basic questions ought to be asked and answered before schools should commit their energy and resources. This brochure attempts to answer some of the questions which have been raised about the NCA's Outcomes Accreditation (OA) model.

Outcomes Accreditation is a school-based accreditation and evaluation model that helps schools document the effectiveness of their programs. Schools are required to target their evaluation efforts by measuring changes in student behavior, i.e., outcomes. OA serves as an alternative to the NCA's traditional evaluation formats.

Recognizing the need for an accreditation process which would focus on student outcomes and not program inputs, the North Central Association's Commission on Schools undertook the development of an alternative evaluation format during the early 1980s. The advice of experts was sought in developing OA, and a model was piloted in over 30 schools during a three-year period. OA was adopted for use by NCA member schools in April, 1987.

Rather than focusing on "inputs" or what the school contributes to the educational process, OA examines "student outcomes" or the influence the school has on the students it serves. Schools identify no more than five areas in which they want to focus their improvement activities. Target goals are written for each area. Three of these target goals focus on cognitive or basic skill areas, and two goals address affective concerns or how students behave or feel about themselves. The goals are written in such a way so that changes in student behavior can be measured over time.

Student outcomes are measured by comparing desired levels of student performance with present performance. This is accomplished by first gathering baseline data about the community, the school, and the current performance level of the school's students. School records and student products are the basic sources for information on student performance. Examples of specific data sources include: criterion- and norm-referenced test results, anecdotal records, attitude inventories, teacher-made tests, student participation rates, writing samples, and attendance and enrollment figures. Surveys and questionnaires collected by the school will serve as another important source of information, especially in gauging perceptions about the quality of the school.

Next, faculty committees establish the desired levels of student performance. Although external sources such as state-mandated goals, national averages or goals developed by textbook publishers might be helpful in formulating performance expectations, educators need to base desired performance levels on their knowledge of each child. The discrepancy that exists between current and desired student performance then serves as the focus of the school improvement plan.

In what is known as "Quality-with-Equity, a subpopulation of students is traced in order to monitor their success and ensure that quality programs are offered in an equitable manner. As school improvement activities are implemented, this subgroup becomes the barometer for measuring the effectiveness of those changes.