

**The Report of the  
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Academy at Solstice  
1904 West Gordon Avenue  
Layton, Utah 84041**

**May 25, 2011**



**Utah State Office of Education  
250 East 500 South  
P.O. Box 144200  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200**

**THE REPORT OF THE  
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Academy at Solstice  
1904 West Gordon Avenue  
Layton, Utah 84041**

**May 25, 2011**

**UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

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State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword.....	ii
Utah State Board of Education.....	iii
Academy at Solstice Ownership, Administration and Staff.....	1
Academy at Solstice Mission Statement, Belief Statements and DRSLs .....	2
Members of the Visiting Team .....	3
Visiting Team Report.....	4
Chapter 1: School Profile.....	4
Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry.....	4
Chapter 2: Northwest Accreditation Commission (Northwest)	
Teaching and Learning Standards.....	5
Mission, Beliefs and Desired Results for Student Learning (DRSLs).....	5
Curriculum .....	5
Instruction .....	6
Assessment.....	7
Chapter 3: Northwest Support Standards.....	8
Leadership and Organization .....	8
School Services.....	9
Facilities and Finances .....	9
Chapter 4: Northwest School Improvement Standard .....	9
Chapter 5: Community Building.....	10
Chapter 6: Major Commendations and Recommendations of the Visiting Team .....	11

## **FOREWORD**

The purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase the quality of instruction and student achievement. In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes in a three-step evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, May 25, 2011, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Academy at Solstice is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Ross Poore is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Academy at Solstice and for their professional attitude which made it possible for them to see weaknesses and strengths and to suggest procedures for improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is most important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Academy at Solstice.

Larry K. Shumway, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent  
of Public Instruction

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\*Board of Regents Appointments

\*\*\* CMAC Representative Appointment

\*\*\*\*\*Charter School Representative Appointment

\*\*UCAT Representative

\*\*\*\*USBA Advisory Representative Appointment

12/28/2010

## SOLSTICE RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT CENTER

Daniel Stuart ..... Executive Director, Owner  
Keoni Anderson ..... Addiction Program, Owner  
Kyle Gillette..... Marketing Director, Owner

### ACADEMY AT SOLSTICE

#### School Administration

Ross Poore ..... Principal  
Virginia Scott ..... Academic Director/English Teacher  
Lise Palmer ..... Assistant Academic Director/Science Teacher

#### Counseling

Rick Jackson MD ..... Psychiatrist  
Melissa Helgesen, RN..... Nursing Director  
Jenny Selent ..... Therapist  
Blake Taylor..... Therapist  
Eliza Hitz ..... Therapist  
Aubrey Riddle..... Therapist  
T.J. Rowden ..... Therapist

#### Support Staff

Megan Watson ..... Fitness Instructor  
Stacey Rosenberg, BS..... Recreation Director  
Diana Weber ..... Head Chef  
Kaitlyn Tyrrell ..... Assistant Chef  
Ryan Campbell, BS..... Summer Team Manager  
Rod Russell, MS, LSAC ..... Winter Team Manager  
Kim England, BA..... Autumn Team Manager

#### Faculty

Kim Beck ..... Math Teacher  
Mindy Stoker ..... Math Teacher  
Jesse Davis ..... History Teacher  
Janice Black ..... Special Ed. Teacher  
Guy Anderson ..... Physical Education

## **ACADEMY AT SOLSTICE**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Academy at Solstice strives to provide a traditional secondary education program that encourages academic, personal and emotional growth among our students within a small residential treatment setting.

### **BELIEF STATEMENTS**

- All students are capable of learning material that is stimulating and applicable to them.
- Student learning is affected by their emotional state, therefore a stable, supportive and emotional safe academic environment is provided to enhance student learning.
- Students will require basic academic skills for success as they transition into adulthood, regardless of the academic or professional goals of the individual student.
- Academic needs of students are best met through regular, inter-disciplinary staff meetings that review problems, goals and needs of all students, both academic and emotional.
- Student learning is enhanced through experiential techniques, field trips and hands on learning interventions.
- Each individual student in our school is responsible for her own actions and is the key to her own success.

### **DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)**

1. Personally and Socially Responsible
2. Effective Communicator

Date of visit: May 25, 2011

## **MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

Robert Stillwell, USOE/NWAC Accreditation Consultant, Visiting Team Chairperson

Matt Webb, Dale Young Community High School, Box Elder School District

Lance Pecht, Benchmark School, Woods Cross

## VISITING TEAM REPORT

### ACADEMY AT SOLSTICE

#### CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

The Academy at Solstice is part of a residential treatment center licensed by the Utah Department of Human Services. The school serves girls ages 14-18 experiencing emotional, behavioral, educational, familial, and substance abuse problems. It is located in Layton, Utah. At the time of the team visit there were 36 girls enrolled.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

Compared to previous years, the school is now serving more than half its students with IEP or Section 504 accommodations. In response to this the school has hired a special education teacher. The school profile was very clear in describing who is being serving and what is being learned.

b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

The collection and reporting of student data in the profile is outstanding. In the future, the DRSL rubrics should be implemented. Implementing the rubrics was not required for this first full-team visit.

c) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The school's self-study was complete and gave a clear picture of what it has achieved and hopes to achieve in the future.

#### **Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:**

- How will the DRSL rubrics be implemented?
- How will the academic program be tied to the therapeutic program?

## CHAPTER 2: NORTHWEST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION (NORTHWEST) TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

### **Mission, Beliefs and Desired Results for Student Learning (DRSLs):**

- a) *To what degree were the school's mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs developed and/or revised collaboratively by the school community to define a compelling purpose and vision for the school and to support student achievement?*

There is a high degree of quality in the school program. The school is focused on two DRSLs that are a good fit for the school's mission and beliefs. The school meets the diverse needs of its students.

- b) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's DRSLs?*

There is strong and clear alignment in support of students making progress on DRSL goals.

- c) *Describe the indicators (measures) that have been developed to assess the school's progress in assessing the DRSLs.*

The school has developed four measureable indicators for each DRSL, as well as rubrics that are poised for implementation.

- d) *To what extent do the school's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs guide the procedures, policies and decisions of the school, and appear evident in the culture of the school?*

Because of the nature of the students the school serves, learning to be more personally and socially responsible and to be better communicators are very appropriate goals. All teachers are committed to helping their students succeed in meeting them.

### **Curriculum:**

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards, the Utah Core Curriculum, reflecting the Utah Life Skills: A Guide to Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions for Success?*

The school accreditation team has made sure the curriculum is based on the Utah Core Curriculum and incorporates many attributes from the Utah Life Skills.

- b) *To what extent does the curriculum engage all students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills?*

It was evident from the observations of the Visiting Team that all students are asked to reflect and use complex thinking when problem solving.

- c) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's DRSLs?*

There is a great sense of teamwork among the school staff. Staff members are focused on delivering the curriculum to help the students make gains on the DRSLs.

- d) *How does the staff use assessments to drive curriculum to ensure that **all** students can reach the intended learning outcomes?*

The staff uses formal and informal assessments for all students, and staff members have a very clear understanding of where each girl is with regard to academic achievement.

**Instruction:**

- a) *To what extent do teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to enhance student learning?*

Academy at Solstice teachers are to be commended for the wide variety of strategies that they use to meet the diverse needs of their students.

- b) *To what extent have the school and the staff developed strategies for instruction that build the capacity for explicitly teaching the identified DRSL in every classroom?*

The school has developed rubrics for its two DRSLs. The next step is to work out how the rubrics will be used. Teachers will need to experiment to find the best way to use the rubrics to maximize student learning on the DRSLs.

- c) *To what extent is the school's professional development program guided by identified instructional needs, and how does it provide opportunities for teachers to develop and improve their instructional strategies that support student learning?*

This past year, the professional development has been focused on accreditation and school improvement. It is recommended that the school develop a professional development plan for teacher training.

- d) *To what extent are teachers proficient in their content area, knowledgeable about current research on effective instructional approaches, and reflective on their own practices?*

The teachers give high-quality instruction. They are well prepared and knowledgeable.

- e) *To what extent does the school effectively implement a well-defined plan for the integration of technology into its curriculum, instruction, and assessments?*

There is room for improvement in providing a plan for acquisition and training for technology resources for teachers and students.

**Assessment:**

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments with performance standards based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

The school is well organized in its use of assessments, both formal and informal. All students are administered the Iowa Test shortly after admittance.

- b) *To what extent does the school have a process to fairly and equitably assess school-wide and individual progress in achieving academic expectations?*

The teachers know the DRSL indicators and have designed their lessons to teach them. They also know their students' academic standing by their success on assignments and other teacher-made assessments.

- c) *To what extent does the professional staff use data to assess the success of the school in achieving its academic expectations?*

The data presented in the school profile was helpful to the teachers in analyzing what is being learned.

- d) *To what extent does the school's professional development program allow for opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing a broad range of student assessment strategies?*

There is room to improve in developing a professional development plan for teacher training. It will take time to work out the implementation of the DRSL rubrics. The teachers should be regularly polled as to their training needs.

- e) *To what extent is there organizational agreement on the use of a school-wide scoring tool to assess the identified DRSL?*

Rubrics with indicators and scores have been developed. This is beyond what is expected for the first full team visit. The next step is for the faculty to come to an agreement on the frequency of obtaining rubric scores.

## CHAPTER 3: NORTHWEST SUPPORT STANDARDS

### Leadership and Organization:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate that actively supports teaching and learning?*

The school leadership has provided and promoted an overwhelming desire to provide teacher-directed instruction wherever possible, and to provide opportunities for rigorous outside credits featuring BYU Independent study work when direct teacher instruction is not available. During the visit, the Visiting Team was able to observe teachers teaching to and from the Utah State Core for their particular subjects. Lesson plans were made available to the Visiting Team on request; these lesson plans were well thought out and written to include a State Core objective and reflect the DRSLs. The classrooms were warm and inviting, but lacked some technological teacher tools that could be used to effectively reach students with a wide range of needs and levels of academic comprehension. The teachers knew who the students were and what each student's particular academic needs were.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative to monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness?*

It is evident that the school leadership has given the DRSLs great thought; the rubric that was included but not required was insightful and applicable to the school program. There has been an effort to make data an important piece of the decision making process; this was evident in the impact made by Iowa testing on curriculum development and overall decision making, and even in the therapy side of the school experience.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and allocation and use of resources at the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment which aligns with the school goals, DRSLs, and school improvement?*

The school has good organization; there was a definite leader, and the whole organization knows who it is. There seems to be a good working relationship between the academic and therapy parts of the school, but they lack a formal process through which information can be passed to teachers. The school has a good process for a master schedule, and decisions about curriculum and course offerings to students are made with the individual students in mind. Teachers stated that they had a hand in the development of the DRSLs; the DRSLs are evident in the classroom but not always applied to the lesson plan, and teachers stated that they may not know how to implement the DRSLs into every lesson. Teachers stated that they felt supported and could get professional development if they wished, but they didn't know what was available to them.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the entire school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning through meaningful roles in the decision-making process?*

Teachers stated that they feel a great amount of freedom to prepare and teach lessons that are important and challenging to the students. Teachers also stated that they feel support from the school leadership in what and how they teach. There is a definite sense of shared responsibility for the students and what they are learning. There is good collaboration between the teachers, but the school lacks a formal process to get information from the therapists to the teachers.

- e) *To what extent has the school established a formal system through which each student has an adult staff member who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning?*

The school has a very formal, effective and efficient intake process for new students. The school leadership knows a great deal about each student before the first day of school. The teachers collaborate on a daily basis during lunch, but that process has been informal. The school has a very intensive therapy program that is essential to its success, but the process of getting information from the therapy program to the teachers is informal.

### **School Services:**

This standard is dealt with in the school's NAAS Annual Report, which requires specific responses and information regarding student support services, guidance services, health services, library information services, special education services, and family and community services.

### **Facilities and Finances:**

This standard is addressed in the school's annual report to Northwest, which requires specific responses regarding the physical plant, finances, audit of school records, advertising, etc.

## **CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STANDARD**

### **Culture of Continual Improvement:**

- a) *To what extent has the school developed and implemented a comprehensive school improvement plan using Collaborating for Student Achievement, the Utah accreditation/school improvement process, that is reviewed and revised on an ongoing basis?*

It is clear that Academy at Solstice has demonstrated its commitment to self-evaluation and continuous improvement through its self-study report, and presented an honest reflection the school. Administrators seek research-based best practices to continue the school improvement process.

- b) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through an aligned and ongoing professional development plan focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

The school's staff members work together to identify areas for improvement, and the facility's administration invests both money and resources in supporting the professional development needs of its staff as part of the school improvement plan.

- c) *To what extent is the new/revised school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up and is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

The development needs of staff members are part of the school improvement plan. The school improvement plan addresses the areas that parents, students and stakeholders feel are critical for improvement; specifically, a Personal/Social Responsibility DRSL was identified as a priority goal in the school's action plan.

- d) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

Academy at Solstice clearly has taken steps through this self-study process to identify its philosophical foundation, and addresses this in the school's vision, mission and belief statements. It is apparent that the school staff has also contributed and embraced this culture of continuous improvement, as well as the students and parents/stakeholders.

## **CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING**

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

Academy at Solstice fosters community building and working relationships within the school through collaboration with other departments, including the special education teacher and the therapists who teach the students life skills.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

The school extends the school community through the use of BYU's online concurrent enrollment/credit recovery courses and local tutors who come to the school and assist students with additional academic help. Independent experts (e.g., psychologists and assessment coaches) are also utilized to assist in student achievement. Experiential learning opportunities and off-site field trips contribute to the overall learning opportunities Academy at Solstice offers its students.

- c) *To what extent has the school engaged the school community in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

The school engages the school community in a collaborative self-study process, as evidenced through the use of staff, student, and parent/stakeholder surveys to identify the needs of the school. The school leadership is committed to gaining input from others to guide future planning.

- d) *How are results of school improvement identified, documented, used, and communicated to all stakeholders?*

The results of the school improvement plan are identified, documented and communicated to all stakeholders through collaboration with the therapists and parents (five parent visits a year to the school), and data collection is available for all stakeholders to see and identify the appropriate action plans needed for continuous school improvement. The school has done a great job of collecting and reporting the data used in the school profile, and this is beneficial in driving future improvement planning.

## **CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

### **Commendations:**

- The Visiting Team commends Academy at Solstice for the high quality of its teachers. The teachers use a wide range of strategies to meet the diverse needs of their students.
- The Visiting Team commends the Academy at Solstice for the educational leadership of Virginia Scott.
- The Visiting Team commends the Academy at Solstice for the well maintained and safe environment provided for students.
- The Visiting Team commends the Academy at Solstice for the quality of its data collection and reporting. The information contained in the school profile provides a

clear description of who is served, where the students come from (physically and emotionally), and what is being learned.

**Recommendations:**

- The Visiting Team recommends that the Academy at Solstice add an action plan for implementing the DRSL rubrics. The rubrics have been developed, and there needs to be a period of adjustment as to how they will be used. A specific action plan for this recommendation will help facilitate its implementation.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Academy at Solstice create a bridge between the school program and the students' treatment plans by integrating the DRSL rubric into the "Hero's Journey" level system.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Academy at Solstice develop a plan for increasing technology resources for teachers and students.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Academy at Solstice develop a professional development plan for teacher training.