

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Bear River High School
1450 South Main
Garland, Utah 84312**

March 16-17, 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**

**Bear River High School
1450 South Main
Garland, Utah 84312**

March 16-17, 2011

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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

**DIVISION OF
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS**

Brenda Hales, Associate Superintendent

**Sydnee Dickson, Director
Teaching and Learning**

**Linda Alder, Coordinator
Teaching and Learning**

**Georgia Loutensock, Accreditation Specialist
Teaching and Learning**

Salt Lake City, Utah

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword.....	ii
Utah State Board of Education.....	iii
Box Elder School District Board of Education and District Administration.....	1
Bear River High School Administration and Staff	2
Bear River High School Mission Statement, Belief Statements and DRSLs	4
Members of the Visiting Team	5
Visiting Team Report.....	7
Chapter 1: School Profile.....	7
Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry.....	8
Chapter 2: Northwest Accreditation Commission (Northwest)	
Teaching and Learning Standards.....	8
Mission, Beliefs and Desired Results for Student Learning (DRSLs).....	8
Curriculum	10
Instruction	11
Assessment.....	12
Chapter 3: Northwest Support Standards.....	14
Leadership and Organization	14
School Services	16
Facilities and Finances	16
Chapter 4: Northwest School Improvement Standard	16
Chapter 5: Community Building.....	18
Chapter 6: Major Commendations and Recommendations of the Visiting Team	19

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, March 16-17, 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 Bear River High School 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 Gary Allen is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Bear River High School 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 Bear River High School.

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

UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

250 East 500 South
P. O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200

District 1

Tami W. Pyfer
52 Ballard Way
Logan, UT 84321
Phone: (435) 753-7529

District 2

Keith M. Buswell
1027 West 3800 North
Pleasant View, UT 84414
Phone: (801) 737-0702

District 3

Craig E Coleman
621 South Main St.
Genola, UT 84655
Phone: (801) 754-3655

District 4

David L. Thomas
7875 South 2250 East
South Weber, UT 84405
Phone: (801) 479-7479

District 5

Kim R. Burningham
932 Canyon Crest Drive
Bountiful, UT 84010
Phone: (801) 292-9261

Meghan Holbrook*

775 North Hilltop Road
Salt Lake City, UT 84103
Phone: (801) 539-0622

James V. (Jim) Olsen**

5657 West 10770 North
Highland, UT 84003
Phone: (801) 599-1095

Larry K. Shumway

Chief Executive Officer

District 6

Michael G. Jensen
4139 S Aubrey Ln
West Valley City, UT 84128
Phone: (801) 955-5550

District 7

Leslie B. Castle
2465 St. Mary's Drive
Salt Lake City, UT 84108
Phone: (801) 581-9752

District 8

Janet A. Cannon
5256 Holladay Blvd.
Salt Lake City, UT 84117
Phone: (801) 272-3516

District 9

Joel Coleman
3740 Bawden Avenue
West Valley City, UT 84120
Phone: (801) 634-6251

District 10

Laurel O. Brown
5311 South Lucky Clover Ln
Murray, UT 84123
Phone: (801) 261-4221

*

Tamara Lowe****

2466 West 650 North
West Point, UT 84015
Phone: (801) 776-0870

Lorraine Austin

Secretary

District 11

David L. Crandall
13464 Saddle Ridge Drive
Draper, UT 84020
Phone: (801) 232-0795

District 12

Carol A. Murphy
463 West 140 North
Midway, UT 84049
Phone: (435) 729-0941

District 13

C. Mark Openshaw
3329 Piute Drive
Provo, UT 84604
Phone: (801) 377-0790

District 14

Dixie Allen
218 West 5250 North
Vernal, UT 84078
Phone: (435) 789-0534

District 15

Debra G. Roberts
Box 1780
Beaver, UT 84713
Phone: (435) 438-5843

Isaiah "Ike" Spencer****

1029 East 11780 South
Sandy, UT 84094
Phone: (385) 646-5360

Tim Beagley*****

3974 South 3550 West
West Valley City, UT 84119
Phone: (801) 969-6454

*Board of Regents Appointments

**CMAC Representative Appointment

****Charter School Representative Appointment

**UCAT Representative

****USBA Advisory Representative Appointment

12/28/2010

BOX ELDER SCHOOL DISTRICT

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Connie Archibald.....President
Bryan Smith Vice President
Lynn Capener..... Member
Karen Cronin..... Member
Jim Fuller Member
Nancy Kennedy..... Member
Heather Young..... Member
Natalie Ashby..... Student Member

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

Ronald Wolff Superintendent
Terry Jackson..... Assistant Superintendent
Mary Kay Kirkland..... Assistant Superintendent
Ron Frandsen Administrative Assistant
Lynn Baty..... Director, Testing
Jim Christensen..... Director, Building and Maintenance
Gerald Jackman..... Director, CTE Department
Kim Lynch Director, Special Education
Darin Nielsen Director, Technology

BEAR RIVER HIGH SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Gary Allen..... Principal
Kristi Capener Assistant Principal
Chad Kirby Assistant Principal

Counseling

Edgar Hibbard..... Head Counselor
Linda Kuwana..... Counselor
Rex McKee Counselor

Support Staff

Loralee Andersen
Tate Anderson
Lene Arias
Shirley Barfuss
Blake Christensen
Jill Christensen
Kim Christensen
Jonna Comstock
Michelle Coombs
Joe Harper
Lesa Hess
Becky Hodge

Melinda Jepperson
Lynn Knell
John Krey
Carla Larsen
Connie Lemmon
Karen Madsen
Sandy Madsen
Colleen Menlove
Brenda Munns
Heather Myers
Lorraine Newbold
Nancy Pence

Susy Rich
Calli Richards
Robyn Richards
Sharon Smith
Tamara Stewart
Lori Thompson
Janette Tomkinson
Allyson Welling
Gina Wells
Keri Yeates

Faculty

Glori Alsop
Westley Burrell
Jennifer Christenson
Steve Cox
Neil Creer
Jayme Dunn
Michael Fuhriman
Rosa Gonzales
Cleo Goodwin

Leonard Hawkes
Pam Hawkes
Kristen Hewlett
Matthew Hyde
Teresa Ingram
Heidi Jensen
Lee Jensen
Kathleen Johnson
Jennifer Jones

Steven Littlefield
Sanford MacSparran
Suzanne Merrell
Emalee Meyer
Steven Meyer
JoAnn Mortensen
Tamera Newman
Dana Palza
Lisa Park

Van Park
Wayne Payne
Brian Petersen
Trent Rasmussen
Becky Reese
Tyler (TJ) Rhodes

Dawn Richards
Clair Schenk
Bradlee Skinner
Eric Stamps
Wade Walton
Peter Watkins

Rodny Wells
Gene Wilcox
Julianna Wing
Kasey Winters
Chris Wise
Jeremy Young

BEAR RIVER HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Bear River High School is to ensure that all students achieve success, learn to be responsible, and cultivate respect for themselves and others.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

Achieve Success

- We believe every student can develop intellectually, emotionally, physically, and socially.
- We believe in honoring ideas, exalt in thought, and cultivate and fostering dreams.
- We believe literacy opens the door to success.
- We believe in creating a climate for exploration that is safe, stimulating, and inviting.

Be Responsible

- We believe that the responsibility of education is shared among students, parents, educators, community, and industry.
- We believe every choice is life inherits its own set of consequences.

Cultivate Respect

- We believe in celebrating differences in ethnicity, culture, learning styles, and maturity.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

1. Learning to Learn
 - Students develop and use multiple learning strategies and study habits.
 - Students organize resources and time effectively and relate their daily activities to learning.
 - Students reflect on and evaluate their learning for the purpose of improvement.
 - Students adapt and adjust to change.
2. Thinking and Reasoning
 - Students gather, organize, evaluate, and apply information.
 - Students recognize, evaluate, and refine their thinking process.
 - Students balance reason and emotion in decision making.
3. Personal and Social Responsibility
 - Students take responsibility for personal actions and work effectively with others.
 - Students respect themselves and others and value diversity.
 - Students act as responsible citizens and participate in activities that promote the common good.
4. Communication Skills
 - Students recognize, analyze, and use various forms of communication.
 - Students communicate with others in a respectful way.

Date of visit: March 16-17, 2011

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Susan Sweet, Wahlquist Junior High School, Weber School District, Visiting Team
Co-Chairperson

Craig Jessop, Fremont High School, Weber School District, Visiting Team
Co-Chairperson

Courtney Johnson, Springville Junior High School, Nebo School District

Rosanne Markham, West Lake Junior High School, Granite School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

BEAR RIVER HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Bear River High School began in 1916 on the third floor of Garland Elementary School. A new building was built to house the high school in time for the 1921-1922 school year. No signs remain of the old campus; all of the original structures have been torn down during renovations, another of which is due to be completed at the end of this school year. Students have been enjoying a new commons area as well as new computer lab space, music rooms, and athletic facilities.

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

The school profile shows a school that has little diversity, average test scores that are fairly stable, and math scores that show more than half of the students fall below the Proficient level. Students in disadvantaged subgroups fall behind the rest of the state. It is unclear from the profile whether they are being compared to all students at the district and state level or to only students with similar disadvantages.

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

- More analysis of test scores in narrative form.
- Comparison of disadvantaged students to all students at Bear River High School.
- Comparison of disadvantaged students to other similarly disadvantaged students in the district and state.
- Brief information about the community in terms of economics, population growth, ethnic makeup, etc.

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

The school's self-study shows the school's weaknesses through its testing scores. It does show the limitations the school has realized with its math scores in particular. However, the Visiting Team learned of a math tutoring program that is helping students, but is not detailed in the report. The team was also extremely impressed with the writing project that the school has made the focus of its accreditation process. The self-study could include more narrative to explain what the data shows about the school, and what the school is doing with that information.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Further disaggregation of student assessment scores, especially math scores.
- Has the math tutoring been beneficial? If so, to what extent?
- How has the writing initiative influenced students in their studies? Does it also play a role in their personal lives?
- How have writing activities in one department benefitted students in their assignments for a separate department?

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?*

Bear River High School spent a great deal of time developing and refining its mission statement when it was accredited six years ago. Following that accreditation, the school felt it needed to further refine its mission statement and beliefs. A committee convened that looked at other schools' missions and beliefs, surveyed the faculty, made changes, and received faculty and staff approval. The school has been using its current mission and belief statements since that time. As part of this accreditation process, the staff reviewed the mission and beliefs and felt that these still reflected the true mission of Bear River High School. No further revisions were made.

In the 2004 Visiting Team's recommendations, Bear River High School was advised to develop school-wide assessment systems for its DRSLs. It was also recommended that they only address one DRSL at a time and phase that in prior to this accreditation visit. The school selected the DRSL of Communication Skills as its focus and has begun institutionalizing that DRSL with writing-to-learn in all content areas. The staff has received intensive professional development from the Wasatch Range Writing Project. Data is being gathered through the *MyAccess!* program, and teachers have submitted lesson plans detailing how they incorporate writing in their content classrooms. Community Council members, students, faculty, and staff all report an increase in the quality of student writing as a result of the school focus on this DRSL.

The Visiting Team commends Bear River High School for the work the school has done to begin institutionalizing the Communication Skills DRSL. The Visiting Team recommends that Bear River High School continue this work with the other DRSLs, using school data as a guide in developing action plans for each of the three

remaining DRSLs. Study teams should be appointed to examine the school's profile data, as well as the latest findings of educational research and future trends to thoroughly examine the DRSLs and develop the corresponding action plans.

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

Bear River High School's mission and belief statements are comprehensive and address key issues pertinent to effective decision making and policy development in the school. The mission statement describes the purpose and direction for the school and reflects a focus on student learning as the top priority. The mission has three main components: Achieve success, Be responsible, and Cultivate respect. These "ABCs" are used throughout the school, and teachers and students know them and live them. They support the DRSL of Communication Skills because school is focused on student learning through writing. Students have increased confidence in school as their writing skills increase. Their belief that "Literacy opens the door to success" is evident.

The Visiting Team commends Bear River High School for its outstanding mission and belief statements and their alignment with the DRSLs.

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

Bear River High School developed an action plan for one DRSL: Communication Skills. Each teacher created a lesson plan incorporating writing and submitted it to the administration. After teaching the lesson, teachers also wrote a reflection. In addition, English classes are using *MyAccess!* to benchmark students in writing. English teachers use *MyAccess!* prompts throughout the year to strengthen student writing, and students are encouraged to make revisions in their writing and resubmit to increase their scores. Data from the past two years shows significant growth in writing in all grade levels. In addition, the school has created a rubric that can be used in classes that are not using *MyAccess!* However, in talking with teachers, *MyAccess!* and the writing rubric are not used much outside of English language arts.

The Visiting Team commends Bear River High School for the work it has done on the Communication Skill DRSL. The Visiting Team recommends that Bear River High School revise its action plan to reflect the steps it will take each year to increase use of the *MyAccess!* program and school rubric school-wide. Bear River High School would also benefit from examining disaggregated writing data to determine how to support students who may be struggling in this area. The Visiting Team also recommends that Bear River High School design similar procedures to measure its other DRSLs.

- 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?*

Bear River High School's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs are based on the school's priorities for improving student learning. The school examined current research prior to selecting writing as a school-wide focus. By using *MyAccess!* for benchmark testing as well as additional writing prompts throughout the year, teachers and students are able to easily measure growth in this area. Immediate feedback from the program and the opportunity to resubmit with revisions for higher scores challenges students, but also provides the support they need to improve.

Although the school-selected DRSLs of Learning to Learn, Thinking and Reasoning, and Personal and Social Responsibility were not addressed in the current accreditation report, there is evidence that they do guide the school. Teachers use writing-to-learn as a way for students to clarify and extend thinking. Critical thinking and high expectations were observed in classroom visits. Parents, students, faculty and staff all report that they feel safe, respected, and valued.

The Visiting Team commends Bear River High School for its high expectations for student learning and the safe environment that is provided daily.

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?*

Bear River High School teachers base instruction and lesson development upon Utah State Core Curriculum standards and objectives. The Visiting Team found strong evidence of collaboration within departments in developing common policies, articulated instruction, scope and sequence and formative assessments. Teachers have been involved in district and school training sessions directed toward helping them unpack standards, organize information and coordinate student learning.

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

A variety of instructional strategies was observed in use in various classrooms throughout the curriculum. Students were engaged in many forms of interactive participation, including thinking and problem-solving skills. It has been recommended that a current action plan be developed to address DRSLs relating to areas of thinking and reasoning.

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

The school DRSL that has been fully addressed is Writing to Learn. The Wasatch Range Writing Project is being used as the curriculum to improve student writing skills in every content area. Representatives from the Wasatch Project have provided training to teachers. A school-wide lesson plan was developed to be used by all of the staff. Teachers were then asked to teach the lesson and submit a reflection piece on what they learned from their literacy activity. The Visiting Team found evidence that all teachers in all departments have taken ownership of the Writing DRSL and are developing and using lesson plans to support this goal. The My Access Writing Program is being used to assess and document progress.

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

Teachers have been involved in district training to develop common assessments by course and department. The Visiting Team found evidence that common assessments are currently being utilized in many areas. Assessment data is being shared at the department level and school-wide. Teachers are available to provide students with individual help before and after school, and cooperative learning is utilized as well as peer support.

Instruction:

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

The Bear River High faculty and staff provide a vast array of learning experiences for their students, from interactive Smart Board activities where students learn about diversity, conflict resolution and other life skills to competency-based skills training in their special education vocational programs.

- 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?*

Evidence of the action plan to increase writing-to-learn and the quantity of writing in all content areas was observed and appeared to be institutionalized. In addition, a comprehensive professional growth plan was presented where all content area teachers provided their professional growth plans, lesson plans, and reflections.

- 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?*

Bear River High School identified the DRSL of Communication Skills to enhance content area instruction through literacy. Professional development, through Wasatch Range Writing Project, has largely been responsible for a paradigm shift where

teachers, in all content areas, value writing as means to increase student understanding. Writing-to-learn has become the focus of instructional methodology to improve the acquisition of learning. The shift was not easy for all teachers; however, through enduring professional development, teachers made the transition and now have witnessed the powerful tool of writing in all content areas.

- 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?*

Teachers are very knowledgeable of their content areas and plan meticulously for student success. The writing-to-learn professional growth plan provided much evidence of teacher self-reflection and planning and demonstrated the school's effort to sustain the commitment of continuous improvement.

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

The use of technology was observed in a variety of settings. Computers were widely available for student use, Smart Boards and other technology aids like iPods, computers, and docking stations were also evident. As determined by the action plan, one technology resource listed was *My Access!* This is an online writing word processing and assessment tool where students practice and receive feedback about their writing. The program grades students' essays instantly and provides targeted feedback.

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?*

Bear River High School has made great strides in this area since its last accreditation visit. The Math Department has horizontally aligned its curriculum, with each teacher teaching the same lessons daily. Teachers have common assignments and tests and meet daily to discuss classroom instruction and assessment results. Some classrooms display student work models to inform students of the level of expectation on assignments. A school-wide writing rubric was created and is being used in some classes, but not consistently. *MyAccess!* is used for school-wide writing benchmark testing each fall and spring.

Teachers report the use of a wide variety of assessments. In co-taught classes, special education teachers work with the content teachers to develop assessments that support the learning needs of their students while still addressing the content objectives.

There is also evidence of performance-based assessment and real-world applications in many classrooms.

However, a survey of staff and students shows clearly defined assessments as an area of weakness in the school. Students would like to have teachers clearly articulate the purpose for assignments and assessments. The assessment focus group recommended that rubrics be clarified for student understanding, and that teachers be encouraged to establish the purpose for assignments and assessments on a regular basis.

- 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 process at Bear River High School seems consistent with other schools throughout the state of Utah. CRT and ACT scores are examined annually to determine areas that need improvement. The school uses the writing benchmark assessment to determine student growth in this DRSL. Counselors evaluate student transcripts to make sure students are progressing toward graduation. Students who fail a class take credit recovery courses to make up missing credits. Counselors also meet one-on-one with students and parents in SEOP meetings annually to assess how a student is progressing toward graduation and to set goals.

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

Staff members at Bear River High School gather data, but seem uncertain of how to use it to achieve its academic expectations. Profile data was present in their report, but analysis of the data was lacking. No demographic information was included in the report. *MyAccess!* data was not disaggregated. Teachers report receiving CRT scores in individual departments, but they do not see the scores if they teach a subject that is not tested. In some departments, teachers meet regularly to look at student assignment and assessment data to plan instruction. Further staff development in the use of data would benefit Bear River High School.

- 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?*

Teachers at Bear River High School have had extensive professional development over the past two years in writing-to-learn. This included a variety of ways they could incorporate writing into each content area. The school-wide writing rubric also came out of this professional development. Most departments also have similar lunch breaks, allowing them to meet together regularly to discuss student learning needs and assessment strategies. In addition, every other Wednesday is early-out day, allowing teachers professional development time for collaboration.

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

MyAccess! is used at Bear River High School for benchmark testing as well as ongoing instruction, especially in English classes. In addition, the school developed a modified rubric that aligns with the traits in *MyAccess!* for use in classes who do not use *MyAccess!* While teachers in all departments report integrating more writing-to-learn in their classes this year, there does not appear to be a consistent use of the writing rubric or understanding of how to use that in contents other than English Language Arts. The Visiting Team recommends further staff development in examining student work and using the school-wide scoring rubric.

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 actively encourages teachers to use good teaching practices and to use the ideas and techniques learned in their writing workshops. The school also encourages math tutoring, which appears to be having a positive effect on the students who need extra help. The school has a positive atmosphere: teachers and students enjoy coming to school and interacting with each other in a climate of learning and academic stimulus.

- 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?*

The school leadership has moved the school forward in two main areas based on the school's need and research that shows progress through their use. The first is the implementation of the Wasatch Reading Program through Weber State University. The second is the use of small group tutoring in mathematics that gives students more access to their teachers for more individualized help. The writing project is collaborative in that students receive instruction and practice in all curricular areas. From the Visiting Team's observations, the use of the writing and the results observed by teachers could be shared to further the success of the program. That which has already been accomplished is laudable in itself, but extending the use of the writing initiative through thorough collaboration could have an even greater impact on the positive results already seen. The math tutoring program is worth the effort to examine as a possible influence on learning and achievement in other curricular areas.

- 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 leadership of Bear River High School manages its resources in two major areas to ensure quality, effective learning. Trust Land funds are used to pay for inservice from Weber State University's Wasatch Range Writing Project. This is the major thrust of Bear River High School and the DRSL that is currently the main focus of school improvement. Help from professors at Weber State University is available to each department so that writing can be implemented into its curriculum.

The second area is the use of math tutors to help struggling math students be successful. Tutors come from the math department on a rotating basis, and they are available to students after school four days per week and one day per week before school. They are compensated through Trust Land funds.

These two areas of emphasis are tied directly to the school's improvement plan and DRSLs.

- 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?*

The school leadership has given responsibility to instructional leaders (department chairs) to encourage and organize collaboration, follow up on assignments to the departments and, when assigned, to report activities to the rest of the faculty. There is an honest effort to include the community in school affairs. The Community Council is active, though not large; parent-teacher conferences are fairly well attended; and, in fact, attendance has gone up since the completion of the new commons (where the conferences are now held) and the addition of a night designed specifically to include the Hispanic community. This is an evening for the Hispanic community to come to school for an orientation in Spanish and some food. Headway is slow, but the opportunity for them to come and be part of the school community is provided. The school does not publish a newsletter, but the web site contains information that can be accessed by anyone.

- 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?*

While the school has not established a formal system through which adults monitor or assist students, the Visiting Team noted that students feel comfortable with their teachers and feel that they can go to them for assistance. The close-knit nature of the community also plays a role in the students' ability to identify with their teachers and

the ease with which they feel they can approach them. Many of the teachers not only live in the community, but they may have grown up here, and their families are long-time members of the community.

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?*

Teachers, staff, parents, students, and administrators collectively worked through the process of accreditation and developed the new school improvement plan. Even though the accreditation/school improvement plan does not specifically describe collaboration in the action plan, collaboration is woven throughout the school culture. The school supports teachers in their efforts to collaborate weekly where teachers meet to create common curriculum and assessments. Interdisciplinary teams of special educators, regular education teachers, and aides collaborate daily for "teaming" classes where units of study are broken down into smaller units in order to accommodate at-risk students. Needs of students are identified weekly in collaborative meetings.

- 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?*

Professional development has had a direct impact on increased student writing performance at Bear River High School. A partnership with The Wasatch Range Writing Project provides teachers with ongoing professional development that focuses on the Communication Skills DRSL and provides effective strategies to improve content knowledge through writing experiences for students. Teachers articulated that they initially did not “buy in” to the idea that writing would make their content areas more comprehensible; however, after implementation, teachers were surprised to see evidence of student learning.

- 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 school-wide action plan entitled “Communication Skills: Using Literacy to Enhance Content Area Instruction” has effectively launched an institutionalized focus on the Communication Skills DRSL. Commitment to the plan is evident throughout the school and in all content areas. “Writing to Learn” has been the sole focus of Bear River High’s accreditation process.

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

Bear River High School provides extensive training, follow-up support and collegial planning time to help teachers remain focused on continuous improvement. Teachers feel tremendous support in obtaining the training they need, especially during economically challenging times.

- e) *What significant progress has been made in implementing the original action plan since the last full visit?*

Following administration changes early in the accreditation process, the new administration took the opportunity to make changes to the former action plan and to implement the new literacy plan. With “Writing to Learn” as the emphasis, teachers were afforded opportunities to implement the new action plan.

- f) *What significant progress has the school made in addressing the **major** recommendations of the previous Visiting Team and/or review team?*

Continued staff development was recommended by the last accreditation Visiting Team where teachers learn how to “unpack” standards, create assessment targets, develop multiple lines of assessment, and implement powerful, research-based instructional practices. Without question, Bear River High School has assimilated these recommendations.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

A focus group was organized that included teachers, classified staff, parents and students. A survey was developed by the group with questions relating to the NSSE Community Building Rubric performance indicators designed to obtain input from faculty, staff and administrators beyond the committee. While specific numbers were not available, the committee determined that the level of performance on fostering community building conditions and working relationships within the school is at a three. Data gathered from this survey supported the focus group's consensus that the school rates a 3.5 in extending the school community through collaborative networks of support for student learning.

The Visiting Team observed strong working relationships and collegiality among staff, administration and students. Teachers in several departments reported ongoing collaborative efforts to strengthen the curriculum and provide articulated instruction in the classroom. Participation by all departments in a school-wide writing project underscores a cooperative and productive relationship between all stakeholders within the school.

The Visiting Team noted that all entities within the school express a high regard for each other. Students feel that teachers and administrators are approachable and are always available for individual help—they further expressed their strong feeling of belonging and working together as a family. Twenty percent of the faculty indicated that improvement is needed in inter-department collaboration and teamwork, with time noted as the greatest issue. Employee data also indicated that better and timelier communication from the top down “would further strengthen a cohesive learning environment.”

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

Bear River High School extends its school community in many ways. Parents and staff members meet regularly as a Community Council to assist in making decisions for school improvement. A student-teacher-parent organization financially supports scholarships and student activities. A part-time school resource officer is assigned to Bear River High School, providing a liaison with community law enforcement. The school hosts an annual Hispanic Night, a Financial Aid Night, and a Literacy Night for parents and students annually.

A work service program is provided for special education students at local businesses and elementary schools in the community. Job training is offered to students through Bridgerland Applied Technology College. Students are transported to sites in

Brigham City and Logan for training, and Bridgerland Applied Technology College classes are also offered on the Bear River High School campus.

There is evidence that many partnerships exist between the school and outside community entities. Local organizations such as service and civic clubs and local businesses provide assistance to school programs. Services from local government agencies such as Human Services and public health organizations are utilized for classroom presentations and referrals. These partnerships provide opportunities to enhance student learning and build productive relationships within the community.

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

It was evident that the Community Council has been a viable partner in the school study. They were well-informed and indicated active involvement in the process. School surveys also provide opportunities for input from parents.

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

Disaggregated data from CRT scores along with data from ACT scores, the Wasatch Range Writing Project, *My Access!* writing program, other formative assessments, as well as student, parent and staff surveys, are used to document school improvement. The results are communicated to all stakeholders through the Community Council, the PTA, parent-teacher conferences, SEOPs, school newsletter and website, and electronic progress reports and report cards.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends Bear River High School for its outstanding mission and belief statements and their alignment with the school's DRSLs.
- The Visiting Team commends Bear River High staff and students for maintaining a positive environment for learning throughout the recent construction process.
- The Visiting Team commends Bear River High's staff and students for establishing and maintaining a feeling of belonging, embracing diversity, and promoting a caring community.

- The Visiting Team commends the departments that have collaborated to develop common classroom policies, grading scales, and common assessments, and articulate scope and sequence.
- The Visiting Team commends the faculty and staff for their effective use of state-of-the-art technology.
- The Visiting Team commends the participation by virtually every teacher in the school-wide writing-to-learn project.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff of Bear River High School continue to gather disaggregated data. The staff is further encouraged to actively analyze the data and utilize the outcome as a basis for making decisions regarding program development, classroom instruction, and school improvement plans.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the Bear River High faculty and administration create action plans for the remaining DRSLs using school data to guide them in their decisions.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the current action plan be revised to include specific timelines and detailed steps necessary to accomplish an identified, measurable literacy goal, and that each of these action plans be completed as soon as possible in order to act as a guide toward further progress over the next six years. The action plans should be reviewed and revised on a yearly basis.