

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Bear River Middle School
300 East 1500 South
Garland, Utah 84312**

March 26-27, 2008



**Utah State Office of Education
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Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200**

**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Bear River Middle School
300 East 1500 South
Garland, UT 84312**

March 26-27, 2008

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

**Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

**DIVISION OF
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Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase 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. It is a three-phased 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 26-27, 2008, 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 Middle 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 Calvin R. Bingham is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Bear River Middle School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about 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 even more 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 Middle School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
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Bonnie Young Nurse

BEAR RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Calvin R. Bingham..... Principal
Chad M. Kirby Vice Principal

Counseling

Linda Kuwana..... Counselor
Matt Zollinger Counselor

Support Staff

Secretaries

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Heidi Shaffer
Janet Stark
Sandra Thompson

Elizabeth Jenson
Natalie Lawson
Ileen McMinn
Kathy Mortimer
Diana Murphy-Owen
Karen Patterson
Stephanie Petersen
Vicky Pitcher
Talauna Stokes

Ted Stangler
Shawn Udy

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Manager
Marcia Iverson
Judy Newman
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Mark Abbott
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Sallie Christensen
Stacy Church
Ann Maree Conrad
Brittney Flint
Kalle Green

Custodians

Brent Marshall, Head
Bart Bennington
Chari Hathaway
Genaro Sanchez

Faculty

Michelle Alexander..... Mathematics
Nancy Brough PE, Health
Marcie Buxton Special Education
Greg Cano Educational Success (School within a School)
Gregg Cefalo Mathematics
Carol Christensen..... Mathematics
Jennifer Christensen..... PE, Swimming
Megan Cranmer Home Economics, FACS

Dean Cunningham	Media Center
Ryan Dubois.....	English, Mathematics
Jayne Dunn	Orchestra
Merlene Ewell.....	Art, English
Duane Fillmore	Science, Mathematics
Rosa Gonzales.....	ELL
Lisa Grunig	English, Speech
Julianne Hansen	Special Education
Helen Henderson.....	Special Education
Lydia Horne	Band, Chorus
Larry James	Music
Janica Kynaston	English, Drama
Daniel Line.....	PE, Health
Lloyd Miner	Technology Education, Mathematics
Ken Oxborrow	Earth and Integrated Science
Bonnie Palmer.....	Social Studies
Lisa Park	French
Mike Perkins	Social Studies
Steve Pickett.....	Technology Education
Lisa Rampton	English
Tyler Rhodes.....	Agriculture Science
Coye Richards.....	Computer Technology, English
Jordan Richins.....	Spanish
Jeff Smart.....	Technology Education
Frank Stevens.....	Integrated Science
Kacee Udy.....	Mathematics
Linda Wilson.....	Special Education

BEAR RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the faculty and staff of Bear River Middle School is to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to function responsibly in society.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

1. We believe in the value of public education.
2. We believe that learning is a life-long process.
3. We believe in the partnership of school, community and home in the educational process.
4. We believe that teachers have the responsibility to teach and that students have a right and responsibility to learn.
5. We believe in using the latest research-based techniques available in education.
6. We believe in fostering the individuality and self-worth of each student.
7. We believe that students should be able to attend school free from fear where respect for each other is expected.
8. We believe in a positive discipline approach. We also expect consequences to be consistent, fair, and timely.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

Bear River Middle School Students are:

1. Responsible Citizens who can
 - accept accountability for personal actions
 - model ethical behavior (e.g. honesty, fairness and integrity)
 - demonstrate a strong work ethic through attendance, punctuality and task completion
 - work cooperatively, share responsibilities and accept supervision
 - respect themselves and others

2. Effective Communicators who can
 - Read, write, listen, speak and use artistic, mathematical, and technological expressions
 - Express ideas with clarity, purpose and audience awareness
 - Recognize, analyze and evaluate various forms of communication
 - Solve complex problems collaboratively

3. Independent Learners who can
 - Commit to create quality work and strive for excellence
 - Use a variety of learning strategies, abilities and time-management skills to enhance learning
 - Reflect on and evaluate personal learning for the purpose of improvement
 - Integrate new information with existing knowledge and experience
 - Solve complex problems independently

Date of visit: March 26-27, 2008

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Karyn Bertelsen, Central Davis Junior High School, Davis School District,
Visiting Team Co-Chairperson

Robinette Bowden, Syracuse Junior High School, Davis School District, Visiting
Team Co-Chairperson

Machelle Filion, Mueller Park Junior High School, Davis School District

Sheri Heiter, Weber High School, Weber School District

Thane Hutchinson, Mount Logan Middle School, Logan School District

Aaron Wolthuis, Snowcrest Junior High School, Weber School District

T. J. Barker, Central Davis Junior High, Davis School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT
BEAR RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL
CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Bear River Middle School is located in Garland, Utah and serves students from several small communities in the Garland and Tremonton areas. Twenty-one buses deliver students to the school who do not live within walking distance. The school is located in a rural community where many families make their living either farming or ranching. The community dynamics however, are changing as facilities such as ATK, a Wal-Mart Distribution Center, AutoLiv and Nucor have moved into the vicinity and are now major employers in the area. The influx of these businesses has had an impact on student enrollment. This impact will no doubt continue, and the effect on Bear River Middle School remains to be seen.

The current enrollment is 646 students in grades eight and nine. The community and school have changed in the past years, but are below the state average for diversity with 89 percent Caucasian, eight percent Hispanic, and three percent other ethnic minorities. Approximately 210 students, or 33 percent, qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. The change in student demographics reflects the changes within Box Elder County and the state.

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

The profile section of the accreditation report contains extensive information regarding demographic information for the Bear River County taken from the 2000 U.S. Census. It is also an educational profile of the faculty and staff, along with recognitions and awards. School programs such as lunchtime tutoring, the after-school achievement program, educational success program, and ESL program are described. Information regarding extracurricular activities such as clubs, tutoring, recognition programs, and community partnerships, as well as the tardy policy, is given in great detail.

After reviewing this material, it is evident that the Bear River Middle School Community is involved with the school. The faculty and staff have many programs in place to connect students with the school and foster student success.

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

The profile sections are exhaustive. The Visiting Team suggests that pictures of partnership buildings, lists of faculty awards, and detailed census information be condensed into a more reader friendly format. The section of the report of

progress data included in this section should be aligned with the development of the action plan.

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

The recommendations of the previous Visiting Team were not completed. It was previously recommended that the school gather data on attendance, grades, grade distribution, and achievement scores compared to earlier scores in prior grades for the same group of students. Since the students only attend for two years at Bear River Middle School, the current Visiting Team concurs with the recommendations from the prior Visiting Team that longitudinal data would be helpful in gathering data that would drive the improvement plan and specific goals. The report should be condensed into a format that presents essential data that is relevant to the formation and evaluation of the school improvement plan.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school be selective and interpretive in the data presented in the profile. Data not only provides a snapshot of the school population and student learning but, more importantly, provides a rationale for components of the action plan and a means to monitor progress toward the DRSL indicators. The data should represent the information base upon which decisions for allocating resources of time, money, and talent are allocated.
- Although there is some attempt to disaggregate the data by ethnic group and family income, the information is not addressed in the development of the action plan.
- There is a limited gathering of information (i.e., surveys of parents, community members and students) to give sufficient data to address the school's progress toward student achievement.
- Although the previous Visiting Team recommended that the school make a significant effort to identify and remediate students who read below grade level, the current Visiting Team could not find evidence that this recommendation was addressed. However, attention was paid to data from the AYP reports, and the school implemented special classes to assist ELL students. Data shows that 11 percent of students were not attending school during a one-month period due to fear of bullying; the current action plan did not address this need. Strategies for a bully prevention program were addressed in 2005. This plan needs to be updated and kept current as long as data shows a need. There is no data showing evidence of the 2005 prevention program's effectiveness.

CHAPTER 2: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

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

- a) *To what extent does the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

The shared vision, beliefs, mission and goals at Bear River Middle School have been established through a collaborative and ongoing effort. The school mission and belief statements have been refined to represent more clarity and purpose. The self-study attempted to involve the vast majority of school staff and other stakeholder groups in formulating and molding the current mission and beliefs into statements. These statements have evolved from several reviews and discussions of the Community Council and faculty. There is evidence of the mission and beliefs being implemented throughout the school in formal and informal teaching and learning opportunities.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success.*

The mission and beliefs of Bear River Middle School reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to supporting student achievement and success. The Visiting Team commends the faculty, administrators, and others for providing school-wide academic support such as lunchtime tutoring, peer tutoring, technology integration, team teaching, individual teacher help, and one-on-one support from counselors. It is apparent that these interventions are readily available and accessible for students. Furthermore, the Responsible Citizens DRSL has been effectively implemented in a variety of ways to promote positive behaviors among students through the broadcasting of KLAW news, teaching of study skills, and various positive reinforcement programs. Students have tremendous opportunities to be involved in a wide variety of curricular and extracurricular activities. The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue to work on identifying and providing appropriate interventions for struggling students.

- c) *To extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

The Visiting Team commends the administrators, teachers, staff, parents, students and others for working together in creating an environment at Bear River Middle school that is conducive to student learning. The Visiting Team also commends the school for reducing the number of belief statements making them more

applicable. The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue to articulate and ensure alignment of the DRSLs, goals, school improvement plan, and accreditation action plan.

- 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?*

During the discussion it became increasingly evident that the bulk of the self-study was conducted under the supervision of the principal, with minimal involvement of the staff. The school improvement plan needs to be updated, as the one submitted showed action steps up to 2005. It is recommended that all the stakeholders be involved in the development of the SIP and design the steps that address the implementation of the mission, beliefs, and DRSLs in the culture and procedures of the school.

Curriculum:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

Bear River Middle School's teachers have a solid understanding and awareness of the contents of the State Core Curriculum and demonstrate functional alignment with their daily instruction. Department members freely share information on included concepts with one another, and have been careful to include and update those teachers who teach the given core subject on a limited basis.

Department chairs have shown exemplary progress in making their teachers aware of State Core Curriculum elements and providing the instructional materials necessary to facilitate student success. Teachers seem to be readily sharing materials, teaching strategies, assessment tools, and other resources to enhance the educational experience. There is ample evidence of productive communication among faculty members with respect to curriculum design and instructional practices. Teachers also regularly participate in peer observations, both within and outside their respective departments.

Faculty members are conscious of the need to incorporate cross-curricular instruction and assessment. Multiple examples of this collaboration were evident, particularly among math and science courses, and also with social studies and language arts classes. Teachers are fully aware of the power of these partnerships and have documented enhanced student performance.

Following a school-wide analysis of grading scales, a common scale was developed for school-wide implementation. Such a scale facilitates consistency

among teachers and courses, and simplifies the understanding of the grading process for all stakeholders.

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

Classroom observations by the Visiting Team provided ample evidence of regular student involvement in the learning process. Students are frequently questioned, participate in discussions, show examples in front of the class, and are generally highly involved in acquiring knowledge. Students are encouraged to actively generate and refine their own understanding rather than to act as passive participants in the process.

Students are frequently given authentic applications for the content they are learning so that they may experience real-world relevance and develop personal connections. Teachers use a variety of problem-solving activities across the disciplines with guidance given as necessary.

Technology is widely used throughout the school to enhance and facilitate conceptual understanding. Students and teachers partner to effectively use LCD projectors, Smart Boards, and other technology to convey essential concepts.

- 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 faculty members are supportive of the objectives identified within the DRSLs, and have taken some steps to incorporate the traits of responsible citizenship, effective communication, and independence in learning within their curriculum. The Visiting Team saw evidence of this in the design of some assessment devices to further support implementation of the DRSLs.

The Student Council regularly promotes the traits outlined in the DRSLs. This group developed and carried out a service project to support our troops in Iraq, through which the students were able to practice the skills of responsible and productive citizenship in an authentic setting. These students fully accepted the responsibility of serving as model members of the school community, and recognized the positive impact their behavior and actions had on the student body.

Many teachers have been trained and currently use the CRISS Study Skills program, and have reported some successes in promoting independent learning with certain content areas.

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

The Visiting Team was able to observe several teachers using assessment data to evaluate and refine student exposure to the respective curriculum. Many teachers use the UTIPS program to provide students with review and personal assessment of progress toward the intended learning outcomes. Use of such materials not only assists students in being successful in individual coursework, but also facilitates future success on the evaluation instruments used in determining AYP.

Teachers appear to understand the need to regularly evaluate student progress toward the DRSLs using a variety of assessment strategies, and many collaborate within departments to identify strengths and weaknesses.

Informal assessments, such as questioning, classroom response systems, and sample work, are often used to provide immediate feedback for both teachers and students. Struggling students can be quickly identified and provided with appropriate remediation.

The Visiting Team recommends that individual departments move toward creating and implementing at least one common assessment per grading period. This will provide an invaluable source of information about instructional delivery methods and the depth of student understanding. Ideally, these assessments should be designed to directly align with the State Core Curriculum and the Bear River Middle School Improvement Plan.

Instruction:

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

It is evident that the school staff designs and utilizes a variety of effective instructional strategies. The faculty was observed using instructional strategies that engage the learner and address a variety of student learning styles. During the site visit, the Visiting Team observed teachers using demonstrations, student discussions, hands-on activities, technology-aided instruction, and cooperative group work.

When interviewed, students expressed appreciation for the efforts of their teachers in designing and implementing lessons that engaged students in the learning process.

It is evident that Bear River Middle School is a very open and inviting school where ideas and recommendations are freely shared among the faculty. The Visiting Team recommends a continued exploration and use of research-based best practices that will actively engage all students in the learning process.

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

The school's DRSLs have been adopted and posted throughout the school. Teachers, in their various content areas, are beginning to modify course curricula to ensure that learning experiences are consistent with the school's mission and goals. The school's student council has focused its efforts on designing assemblies, service projects, and other activities aimed at helping all members of the student body become responsible citizens.

- 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?*

The school administration and staff appear committed to continuous self improvement. They have designed and implemented programs which address identified areas of concern in the school (e.g., lunchtime tutoring to help students with missing or late assignments). In choosing areas for continued professional development, the Visiting Team encourages the administration and staff to select opportunities for growth that are strongly aligned with the school's goals and performance standards for student learning.

- 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?*

When interviewed, teachers commented on positive interaction within and among departments. First- and second-year teachers expressed that they felt welcome in collaborating with colleagues in improving instructional approaches. The Visiting Team is concerned that 25 percent of teachers are teaching in areas in which they are not highly qualified, and recommends that the administration continue to assist all teachers in obtaining the necessary state endorsements which will enable them to become highly qualified in the areas in which they are teaching.

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

Bear River Middle School is considered a district leader in the integration of technology into its curriculum. With the help of grant money, the school has purchased 14 Smart Boards and additional LCD projectors which have enhanced teacher instruction. Teachers are excited about designing and implementing lessons which utilize this new technology. Students also commented that the use of the Smart Boards has helped to engage them more in the learning process. The Visiting Team encourages the school to regularly reevaluate the effectiveness of

these instructional tools and use them in an effort to further the school mission and goals.

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?*

School-wide assessment was started with the implementation of a standardized, school-wide grading scale that has allowed for a more uniform assessment. The school's survey showed that teachers link instruction and assessment to their newly established DRSLs. An array of assessments is provided, and the faculty is informed of state and standardized scores.

- 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 school has implemented a standardized, school-wide grading scale for more uniform assessments.

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

With such limited time to meet and analyze data, the staff uses more individualized data gathering (i.e., quizzes, assignments, labs, projects, presentation, learning logs, labs, and observation). Standardized tests and state tests scores and distributed to the faculty and reviewed through department and faculty meetings.

- 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?*

Because they have only one professional development day each month, staff members voiced the opinion that more could be accomplished to analyze and interpret data, reflect on types of assessment to better address student achievement. The Visiting Team recommends that Box Elder School District review the possibility of having more professional development days each month.

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

Teachers and staff showed approval and agreement to the use of the evaluation tool developed by their school.

CHAPTER 3: NAAS 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?*

Through surveys and interviews, the school showed evidence of some factors promoting and fostering an academic learning climate, with concerns about not being able to give additional time to students for after-school tutoring due to extracurricular activities. The Visiting Team recommends that a more current school action plan be developed that aligns with the needs of the school to provide guidance with a plan to better implement the needs of the school and improve teaching and learning.

- 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 Visiting Team found limited development and partial implementation of effective decision making and discussion. It was evident that, because of the limited time given to teachers for professional development, collaboration to monitor instructional effectiveness and student achievement is hindered. The school action plan needs to be updated and improved using current data and evidence (indicators) of implementation to monitor teacher and school implementation.

- c) *To what extent does the 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 expressed having a difficult past year, but new programs (i.e., tardy program, education success) provided for improved operations and management procedures in the school. The principal expressed the lack of continuity with programs and operations in the school due to changes made within his administration each year, as well as trimester schedules and new teachers.

- 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 Visiting Team found an involved administration that has a strong commitment to reaching out and involving the community. Various community

agencies were mentioned in supporting school programs. The self-study team encouraged the leadership to involve and empower the staff, district, and school-community more extensively in the decision-making and development of the school improvement plan and processes to improve student achievement. The opinion was expressed that there was a lack of vision of faculty for the self-study process.

- 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 adopted an advisory program and used the class in a many ways to achieve a better connection and service to students. Students are trained in character education topics and they present in classes.

CHAPTER 4: NAAS 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 work well in teams and improve student learning by decreasing the student-to-teacher ratio. They have implemented the action plan and are dedicated to the programs to help students who are at risk. Teachers have been trained and continue to train each other with their knowledge of technology. SEOPs are done to help students understand career options and community partners share in that responsibility.

- 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*

Teachers have been concerned about student writing, and there is evidence that the Language Arts Department has implemented the My Access program in the school to address their concern. Security cameras are currently being installed to improve student safety. Students are taught accountability by being responsible for assignments

- 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?*

There is a limited connection between the profile, DSRLs, and action plan. Although the plan can be articulated, there is not sufficient evidence to determine what drives the action plan.

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

Bear River Middle School is supportive of school improvement and professional development. Teachers are driven to improve technology in their school. Teachers have expressed a concern about the location, time and variety of district training. Although they are limited by the school's location, the teachers participate in district training and site based training.

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

The school is supportive of implementing the previous action plan. Support and resources have been provided to improve writing and extracurricular activities. Significant resources and time was spent on items not on the previous action plan.

The evaluation showed sufficient evidence the prior action plan was implemented and addressed the goals. It is recommended that the school action plan include evidence of implementation with current persons responsible.

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

Major progress and effort has been done in refining and addressing the former recommendations of the prior Visiting Team.

The design of the focus groups includes members from varied curricular areas. There is evidence of limited parental involvement. The Visiting Team was unable to discern the inclusion of students in this particular area.

Remediation strategies are currently in use and are being evaluated for effectiveness. It is clear to the Visiting Team that the administration and staff are fully committed to improving student performance.

Data collected is not being used to its full potential. Results of tests and surveys should be immediately and completely analyzed to make appropriate modifications to the overall school improvement process.

The Visiting Team saw no evidence that progress has been made with respect to placing students with below grade level reading skills in specialized reading classes, nor has the team seen any development or research of curriculum for such a course.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

This Visiting Team found evidence that Bear River Middle is fostering a sense of community among students, parents and staff members. A common theme emerged among teachers, administrators, counselors and school staff was that everyone works together to help students be successful. Everyone truly cares for the students. All stakeholders expressed that they felt they were listened to and involved in helping develop the direction and climate of the school. Additionally, there is a strong sense of pride in the school as a pillar of the community.

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

The school has established a strong network of support among community stakeholders. In addition to performing the standard networking activities such as back to school night, newsletters, web pages and parent-teacher conferences, the school has built a strong relationship with the neighboring high school. Scheduling has been coordinated so that Bear River Middle students can participate in extracurricular high school activities, and so that teachers and resources can be shared.

Furthermore, the school has formed a lasting relationship with local merchants, businesses, and government agencies that donate time and resources to promote learning and citizenship of students. For example, Thiokol sends out engineers and money to support and aide with a rocket unit the school holds annually.

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

Areas of focus for the school improvement plan were identified by a number of stakeholders in the school community. The administration, Community Council, parents, students and department heads worked in collaboration with focus group leaders to identify areas of school improvement. The school improvement plan then surveyed students and parents to receive additional feedback and make alterations based on areas of need.

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

School stakeholders identified and documented areas of concern through test results, survey results and qualitative feedback which they presented to the Community Council. Then focus groups comprised of teachers, parents and students formulated a plan to address areas of concern.

The school improvement plan is communicated through (1) a PTA newsletter that is distributed two or three times annually to all parents, (2) PTA minutes which are sent via an e-mail distribution list for all members, (3) the KLAW newscast (which is aired in all classrooms), (4) back to school night, (5) and parent-teacher conferences, where surveys about school improvement were completed by parents.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the parents, students and teachers for the very supportive effort of school programs such as the incentive program. The Visiting Team felt that the more the principal got parents involved, the more the parents understood and supported the leadership of the school. There is, in general, a positive school climate, with both students and teachers valuing the administration. There is a good sense of school community.
- The Visiting Team commends the teachers' commitment to the success of the students. Teachers come before and after contract hours to meet the needs of students. Students speak highly of instructional practice and the limited use of lower-level cognitive activities (worksheets). There is a positive relationship between students and teachers with a commitment to help students learn. Team-taught classes and peer tutoring are extremely effective.
- The Visiting Team commends the effective instructional methods occurring on a regular basis within the classroom. There is a high level of technology application, such as Smart Boards.
- The Visiting Team commends Bear River Middle School's strong, fair and consistent discipline plan that encourages student accountability.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school work to collect and analyze data to support the action plan. There was not enough evidence to show the strengths and weakness of the academic programs, nor are these addressed in the school action plan. Surveys did not indicate the scholastic strengths or weaknesses of subgroup populations.
- The Visiting Team recommends the school work to implement research-based practices of identifying failing students and implement intervention programs to meet the needs of these students.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Bear River Middle School develop and implement a professional development plan. There needs to be a professional development schedule which provides time for teacher collaboration, i.e. department, team, focus group, etc.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Bear River Middle School involve and inform the community in the school improvement process. The community needs more knowledge of the DRSLs and their value. In general, the school needs to provide more varied forms of communication to parents and community members.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the faculty and staff be more involved in the school improvement process. Although the principal has given many hours to make the self-study process effective, this process now needs to be handed over to the faculty to ensure the critical support needed to sustain and refine the self-study process.