

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Emery High School
975 North Center
P.O. Box 499
Castle Dale, Utah 84513**

March 6-7, 2008



**Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
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Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200**

**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Emery High School
975 North Center
P.O. Box 499
Castle Dale, UT 84514**

March 6-7, 2008

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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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 6-7, 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 Emery 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 Gwen Callahan is also commended.

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

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
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EMERY HIGH SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Gwen Callahan..... Principal
Jim Jones..... Assistant Principal

Counseling

Dixie Fielder Counselor
Christine Hunt..... Counselor

Support Staff

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Barbara Hymas..... Secretary
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Marilee Cox Educational Assistant
Sherie Fausett..... Educational Assistant
Sylvia Lofthouse Educational Assistant
Donna Thomas Child Nutrition Program
Edna Fox Child Nutrition Program
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John Bissell..... Janitorial
Joann Farrer Janitorial
Garth Labrum..... Janitorial
Melinda Morris Janitorial
Leo Wright..... Janitorial

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Shanae Butler	Tom Hansen	Dean Nelson
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Corrine Dalton	Peggy Johnson	Kevin Reynolds
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Darrell Gardner	Jim Keele	Josh White
Kevin Gordon	Nancy Martinez	Wendy Whittle
Steven Gordon	Lee Moss	Linda Wilberg

VISITING TEAM REPORT

EMERY HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

Emery High School's mission is to prepare all students for post high school experiences, to collaborate with parents to teach effective social skills and values, and to do so in a safe environment.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

We believe that the primary purposes of schools are to serve both the individual and society; therefore, Emery High should do the following:

- Provide for each student the kind and amount of education which will prepare the student for post-high school experiences including educational training and work.
- Recognize individual differences and adjust the programs to the mental and physical needs of each student.
- Be an unbiased, impartial place where each student has the opportunity to learn.
- Teach social skills and attributes including respect, responsibility, integrity, and patriotism, which reflects the values of the community.
- Reflect the interests and follow the policies of the state but safeguard the idea of local control.
- Consider the present needs and interests of the area, as well as future needs and interests, in determining characteristics of the curriculum.
- Provide a comprehensive guidance program that helps students take advantage of scholarship and work opportunities.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING (DRSLs)

1. **Reading**: Set up a whole school sustained reading program to improve reading skills and in-service teachers on reading difficulties for secondary students.

2. **Writing**: To assure successful performance in post-high school writing, students will accurately convey desired information by writing with clarity and purpose through the use of specifically identified writing skills.
3. **Integrity**: Students will acquire and apply one quality of integrity by completing assignments, projects, assessments, and other school requirements without cheating.

Date of visit: March 6-7, 2008

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Dr. John Goldhardt, Washington County School District/Dixie State College of Utah, Chairperson

Susan Anderson, Grand County High School, Grand County School District

Paula Evans, Tintic High School, Tintic School District

Tod Johnson, Wasatch High School, Wasatch County School District

William (Ed) Reynolds, Whitehorse High School, San Juan County School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

EMERY HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Emery High School is located in the rural community of Castle Dale in Emery County. The school draws students from all communities in Emery County except Green River. The local economy includes mining, transportation, communications, utilities, government, and tourism. However, the economy is still dominated by the coal mining industry and government. This encourages a fluctuation in population due to the energy demands for coal.

Emery is a comprehensive high school for students in grades 10-12 and has a large offering of academic core, CTE, arts, and healthy lifestyles courses. The school serves as a community center for the county, and there is a high rate of participation by community members at school events. The current county population is 10,438, and the school has a student enrollment of 475.

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

- Since the last accreditation site visit in 2002, the school has seen improvements in student achievement and the organizational structure related to the school improvement plan.
- The proficiency rate for students in Language Arts is phenomenal, although there is a need to focus on expository writing skills.
- There is a need to design curriculum, instruction, and assessments to help the students develop higher proficiency rates in mathematics and science.

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

While the school has disaggregated data for gender and ethnicity, there is a need to disaggregate data for poverty-stricken students. How proficient are students from a background of poverty (31 percent of the student population) in key academic areas as compared to the rest of the school population?

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

The Visiting Team is satisfied that the self-study is a true reflection of Emery High School, and was impressed with the honesty and forthrightness of the profile.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Add Advanced Placement pass rate data, including disaggregated pass rate data for gender, ethnicity, and poverty status.
- Student perception data is needed. The school profile data will be much stronger and more meaningful with the inclusion of student perception surveys (such as the student NSSE survey).
- Include disaggregated data on grades and attendance. What are the attendance rates and grading trends of students from backgrounds of poverty compared to the rest of the school population?

CHAPTER 2: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) 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?*

The Visiting Team found ample evidence that the entire school community was involved in addressing the school's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs. Teachers, students, and parents all participated in the process. This included a comparison and revision of the 2002 self-study process.

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

There is complete alignment among the mission, beliefs, and DRSLs.

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

Indicators have been designed for each DRSL. The most specific of these indicators is for the writing DRSL. The entire school staff utilizes a writing rubric that is used during the daily literacy strategies class. In addition, the action plan addresses the need to design assessments with regard to integrity and cheating.

- 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?*

The reading DRSL is a continuation from the 2002 self-study, and it is evident that it has been institutionalized in the school organization with regard to policies, curriculum design, instruction, and library circulation. In addition, the school's trust land funds are being utilized to address the implementation and sustainability of the DRSLs.

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 Visiting Team found a wide range of quality programs. The school is able to offer many AP and honors classes, along with many electives. Teachers use the Utah Core Standards to guide their instruction and assessment. There is evidence of collaboration within their departments and across the curriculum. The school tries to meet the needs of all students by offering a wide variety of classes. Emery High School has achieved AYP in recent years.

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

The Visiting Team found evidence that many classes engage students in inquiry (more so in honors and AP classes), problems-solving, and using higher-order thinking skills. The school has leveled its math classes to try and meet the needs of all math students. It offers many classes for students who want to excel. Emery High School has excelled in the Sterling Scholar program, and use its Sterling Scholars to help other students. Teachers use many methods of involving students in the learning process.

- 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 high school has developed a Learning Strategies class that addresses the reading and writing DRSL. Each class focuses on reading and writing. The school has developed a writing rubric to judge individual student writing, and uses peer readers to give feedback to students. Teachers have expressed concern about the cheating problem in the school, and have developed a plan to address that DRSL in the future. Classrooms also displayed posters listing Test Taking Procedures to help address the integrity DRSL. The Visiting Team also found Six Traits of

Writing guidelines posted throughout the school. Most teachers are implementing reading and writing into their classrooms based on the school's DRSLs.

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

Emery High School has created many remedial programs to help students who struggle to pass the UBSCT. There are classes during school, and after-hours programs for students who need help learning the necessary material. Sterling Scholars help tutor students in many different subjects. The school provides an Activity Bus for students who need to remain after school for remediation and tutoring. The math department has leveled its classes so that instruction can be more appropriate and meaningful for each student. Teachers also use a variety of assessments to see that students reach the intended learning outcomes. Many teachers use journals, poetry, art, newspapers, brochures, video, and oral presentations as means of assessment.

Instruction:

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

There was evidence in honors and AP classes of effective instructional strategies that enhance student learning. However, there was much less evidence of effective instruction in general education classes. The most-used instructional strategies witnessed by the Visiting Team included worksheets, questions from textbook chapters, and videos. It would benefit all students to receive the same type of enriched instruction that is provided in honors and AP classes.

- 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 strategies for instructional strategies in writing and reading. This, however, is much more evident in the Language Arts department than in other core academic or elective courses. Most teachers use the expository writing rubric effectively.

- 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 has provided opportunities for teachers to participate in professional learning and development. (This has been initiated by school leadership, not

district leadership.) Teachers who have participated in research-based professional learning have utilized more effective instructional strategies than those who have not participated. Great effort by the school leadership has been provided in the areas of reading, science, and math instruction. The students would receive more effective instruction if the school had a comprehensive professional development plan in place.

- 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?*

Most teachers are proficient in their content areas—specifically, their knowledge of the content. In fact, the school has just recently hired a Level IV math teacher after an extensive search. There is a need to make a connection between knowledge of content and the effective teaching/delivery of content to students.

- 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 school has ample technology support, in that there are many computer labs on the school campus. For example, the school has a computer lab just for the Language Arts department, for writing and research. However, there was no evidence of a well-defined plan for the integration of technology into curriculum, instruction, and assessments.

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?*

Efforts are on going to map the Core Curriculum. Classroom assessments are emerging that are aligned to the standards and objectives of each course. Assessments include labs, quizzes, tests, projects, writing assignments, and observable performance assessments.

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

There is evidence that Emery High School is using UBSCT and CRT results to evaluate school-wide and individual academic achievement. In addition to UBSCT and CRT, the school is also using ACT, AP, STAR, and the Six Traits of Writing.

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

The professional staff uses data to evaluate math placement and to make recommendations for UBSCT tutoring. UBSCT results have also been used to identify the need to improve reading and writing, and have led to the implementation of the Learning Strategies class. Departments are working on improved student learning based on feedback received from CRT tests.

- 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 evidence of emerging professional development invested in mapping course curricula and aligning them to the state standards and objectives for the course.

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

There is a school-wide effort at Emery High School to improve reading and writing. A Learning Strategies class has been implemented focusing on this area. There is agreement on the use of a common scoring rubric to assess writing. STAR is used to assess reading. Integrity is an emerging DRSL for which a common assessment has not yet been agreed upon.

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?*

The Visiting Team found ample evidence that the leadership team is consistently facilitating and designing the organizational structure of the school to focus on powerful teaching and learning. This is a work in progress. There is a strong focus on an academic learning climate, including UBSCT preparation and remediation, ACT Preparation, AP preparation, and an overall expectation for excellence.

- 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?*

Major instructional decisions are aligned with the school beliefs and mission, as well as best-practices research. For example, school improvement meetings and faculty professional learning are generally based upon the recommendations of valid and reliable research.

- 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?*

There is evidence to indicate that resources are aligned with the DRSLs and the action plan. For instance, the funds from trust lands resources are being used to enhance student math skills. In addition, physical facilities are available before or after school to accommodate student needs, and the Comprehensive Guidance Counseling Center provides information, support, and guidance.

- 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?*

Decisions are made collaboratively. There is a strong Community Council in place that meets regularly to discuss school goals, trust lands funding, and school policies. One Community Council member stated, “Our voices, ideas, and concerns are taken seriously by Mrs. Callahan, and I believe we have a true ‘say’ in this school.” In addition, students are involved in decision making through the input of student leaders and student focus groups.

- 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 most formal established system is the SEOP process as part of Comprehensive Guidance. However, each time the Visiting Team met with or interviewed students, they were consistently told that they felt connected to and cared about by most of the teaching staff. In addition, the school has developed a comprehensive Learning Strategies class for all students.

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 NAAS, which requires specific responses regarding the physical plant, finances, audit of school records, advertising, etc.

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?*

The Visiting Team found ample evidence that the self-study and the process involved in completing it was comprehensive and utilized the leadership, teachers, students, and parents in the process. There were also clear indications that the 2002 study has been extensively used, reviewed, updated, and revised as needed.

- 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 is using trust land funds to enhance student achievement in key areas. However, a comprehensive professional development plan is not in place.

- 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 action plan is detailed, and is completely aligned with the mission, beliefs, and DRSLs. The school has developed an innovative concept map for its action plan. The plan has included most of the key areas needed for implantation. The only missing area is the accountability piece regarding *who* is responsible for each part of the plan.

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

There are clear lines of communication between the leadership and teachers, and there is an expectation by school leadership and teacher leaders to focus on continual quality and student success. Indeed, the school principal has provided

and facilitated conditions and culture in the school that support continuous improvement and a clear focus on enhancing student achievement.

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

The most significant progress is in the area of reading. In fact, there has been so much work in this regard that this part of the action plan has gone from the planning level to the implementation/institutional level. In addition, it is important to note that the school has learned the importance of really zeroing in on a few significant goals rather than many less important goals.

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

The most notable in this area was total retooling of the desired results for student learning. The school found that it was best to take a “less is more” approach, in that they chose to focus on three comprehensive and measurable DRSLs. In addition, the school has made a concerted effort to involve the community and to get the local newspaper to report about the academic success of students, not just athletic success.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

Administrators, teachers, and students at Emery High School work together on community building and student achievement. The school is clearly proud of its student council. The student council plans, communicates, and directs student activities. The student council has tried to build the school community through activities like cereal nights, corn mazes, and pool parties.

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

Emery High School extends the school community through collaborative networks with the fire department and the sheriff’s department (such as the mock disaster). School facilities are shared with the community. The community is supportive of school athletics and arts. The junior prom has become a cultural event with excellent participation from both the students and the community, in which students learn social dancing and community attendance fills the Spartan Center.

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

It is evident that administration, faculty, students, and community have come together in the self-study process. The community has successfully developed a mission statement, and desired results for student learning that are guiding practice at this school. It is clear that a supportive community is very involved in improving student learning.

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

The results of school improvement are identified through testing measurements like CRT and UBSCT testing. Writing progress is measured with a rubric. School climate has been identified through parent and teacher survey. Results are communicated to stakeholders through SEOP meetings, newsletters to parents, new student orientation, the local newspaper, and council discussions.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the teachers for their positive relationship with and care for the students. The Visiting Team was informed many times by students that they feel like the teachers at Emery High care about them.
- The Visiting Team commends the leadership of the school for having a clear focus on what matters most: **STUDENT SUCCESS**. Indeed, the school principal is a true instructional leader.
- The Visiting Team commends the school for its involvement of parents and the community. It is apparent that Emery High is a true community center, and wants parents and community members informed and involved.
- The Visiting Team commends the school for its DRSL focus on reading and writing. It was evident to the Visiting Team that an emphasis on content reading literacy has been institutionalized. The Visiting Team further commends the school for the implementation of a daily Literacy Strategies class for all students.

- The Visiting Team commends Emery High for fostering true student leadership. Student leaders are able to plan and make decisions that are respected by the school and the community.
- The Visiting Team commends the school for using trust lands funds to support the implementation of student proficiency in academic core areas including reading, writing, and integrity.
- The Visiting Team commends Emery High School for its honesty and forthrightness concerning the issue of cheating. The Visiting Team further commends the school for making the alignment of cheating with integrity.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school design and implement a comprehensive professional development plan that is completely aligned with the DRSLs and the action plan. The Visiting Team further recommends that professional development be aligned with valid and reliable research-based best practices.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school leadership team and teaching faculty design and fully implement research-based best strategies that promote active learning of all students in all classes.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Emery High School continually utilize the input and ideas of students to address key issues, especially the reduction of cheating.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school incorporate a more comprehensive approach to assessments to guide the design of curriculum and instruction. This may include the frequent use of standards-based formative assessments so that teachers always know what students know, understand, and are able to do.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the action plan be modified so that there is clear accountability with regard to who is responsible for each part of the plan.