

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Evergreen Junior High School
3401 South 2000 East
Salt Lake City, Utah 84109**

April 14-15, 2010



**Utah State Office of Education
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**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Evergreen Junior High School
3401 South 2000 East
Salt Lake City, Utah 84109**

April 14-15, 2010

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Salt Lake City, Utah

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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, April 14-15, 2010, 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 Evergreen Junior 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 Mark Grant is also commended.

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

Larry K. Shumway, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
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Linda K. Mariotti Assistant Superintendent, Instructional Services

EVERGREEN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Mark Grant..... Principal
Linda Manwill..... Assistant Principal

Counseling

Carma Barnhart..... Counselor
Susan Cramblitt..... Counselor

Support Staff

Janene Hixson..... Principal's Secretary
Barbara Spring..... Financial Secretary
Janice Wirthlin..... Counseling Secretary
Teresa Evans..... Comprehensive Guidance Secretary
Val Westover..... Head Custodian
Gail Hoskins..... Assistant Custodian
Brian Bonner..... Associate Custodian
Bethany Johnson..... Assistant Custodian
Stephen Forsythe..... Sweeper
Dan Duncan..... Sweeper
Martin Ramirez..... Sweeper
Eileen Morley..... ISS Tracker
Tammy Demke..... Behavioral Tracker
Lynn Cheney..... Library Aide
Elizabeth Carzado..... Spec. Ed Aide
Missy Atkins..... Spec. Ed Aide
Royal Simpson..... Spec. Ed Aide
Rachael Sheffield..... ESL Aide/Testing
Sheila Thompson..... Lunch Clerk

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Lindsay Boucher
Richard Brinton
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Cynthia Burch
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Nancy Crockett
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Anna Greene
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Robert Kleyweg
Catherine Lambert
Angelina Malm
Sutton Morgan
Melissa Mullins

Judy Newton
Janet Phinney
Barbara Ranck
Susan Root
Cynthia Smith
Mark Soltis
Matthew Ulmer
Dave Wadsworth
Nicole Wadsworth
Cheryl Williams

EVERGREEN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

OUR VISION

Every student will achieve.

MISSION STATEMENT

Student Success

OUR BELIEF STATEMENTS

- Our school is based on *Community of Caring* values: responsibility, family, trust, respect, and caring.
- Student learning is the priority at our school.
- All students can learn.
- Students learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning process.
- Challenging expectations increase individual student performance.
- A safe environment promotes students learning.
- Each student is a valued individual with unique intellectual, physical, social, and emotional needs

SCHOOL MOTTO:

Educational Excellence

SCHOOL MASCOT:

The Eagle
Evergreen Eagles: Above the Rest

DESIRED RESULTS FOR STUDENT LEARNING

1. LIFELONG LEARNING

- Students will know and use reading and writing strategies
- Students will show continued involvement in extracurricular activities
- Students will show involvement in the arts
- Students will watch the news and be aware of current events
- Students will participate in inquiry-based learning

2. RESPONSIBLE CITIZENSHIP

- Self-disciplined students will be on-time, on-task, and prepared for the class
- Students will demonstrate respect for themselves and others
- Students will participate in community service regularly

3. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR

- Communicates using technology and understands ethical uses of technology
- Creates artistic expression through art, music, dance, or drama
- Shows improvement in communicating in written form in these areas: mechanics/grammar, format, organization, content, word choice
- Demonstrates ability in oral presentations in these areas: knowledge of topic, delivery, and organization

Date of Visit: April 14-15, 2010

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

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

Alan Smith, Central Davis Junior High School, Davis School District, Visiting
Team Co-Chairperson

Kim Baker, West Hills Middle School, Jordan School District

Scott Richard Nelson, Highland High School, Salt Lake School District

Ryan Nield, Lehi High School, Alpine School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT
EVERGREEN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Evergreen Junior High School is located in the Millcreek area of Salt Lake City. The building was first occupied in the fall of 1956, and has an enrollment that presently averages about 775 students. Although the school is in a typical middle-class neighborhood, predominately Caucasian in ethnicity (77 percent), the demographics are gradually changing with the increase in various other ethnic groups moving into the school boundaries. Those groups include Asians (2.9 percent), African Americans (3 percent), Hispanics (10 percent), American Indians (2 percent), Pacific Islanders (1 percent), and “Unknown” (3.7 percent). In addition, fifteen percent of Evergreen Junior High School population is on Special Permit (i.e., they live outside school boundaries), which is a twelve percent decrease over the prior four years.

Enrollment at Evergreen Junior High School has decreased over the last four years by seven percent, and the school’s minority population (23 percent) has increased gradually over the years. The Hispanic population is currently at 10 percent—a four percent increase since 2005. Evergreen Junior High School percentage of low socioeconomic families is 18 percent—much higher than two neighboring “east-side” junior highs—and the school has a mobility rate of 23 percent, a 4.5 percent increase over four years. English language learners receiving services increased seven percent in the past four years, the percentage of students with IEPs decreased by one percent in the past five years, and students classified as having low socioeconomic status increased 50 percent over the past three years.

Evergreen Junior High School has moved from a traditional junior high to a middle school program and implemented an eight-period block schedule. Evergreen has fully organized grade-level teams who meet regularly to plan activities, share curriculum, develop programs, and discuss the assessment needs of their students. Planning time is part of their early release of students on Fridays. A block schedule has provided a greater variety in class choices and furthered the school’s mission statement of “Student Success.”

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

Evergreen Junior High School is very aware of its declining enrollment pattern; however, the school has anticipated a growth in the diversity of its ethnic population, and has continued to grow with students on special permits.

It is evident from the self-study that to improve student achievement the school will need to continue the focus on curriculum benchmarks, mapping standards,

and redoubling its efforts to provide help to those students in need of extra study with an emphasis on areas of weakness: math procedures, science, geography, and core subjects with the economically disadvantaged and subpopulations. Equally important, the trend in the data shows EJH is significantly above the district averages in core subjects, including both the economically disadvantaged and non-Caucasian students. The data also showed that by the ninth grade, strategies for school success were being mastered.

The school has a strong belief in aligning its curriculum closely with the core. Furthermore, Evergreen Junior High School has found that its seventh grade students struggle the most with failing grades in core classes, and by ninth grade there was a marked improvement in earning passing grades in core classes.

Noted in the school's various programs to assist students individually is a Behavioral Tracker who monitors students with poor grades, an after-school tutoring program, and an ESL teacher for after-school tutoring. Evergreen Junior High School has a MESA program for minority students and has expanded gifted and talented offerings in each core area. To identify and help students who need special help in the school's goal areas, reading and writing, the STAR Reading program and My Access program are used for assessments.

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

Evergreen Junior High's school performance is excellent in terms of the school's collection and written analysis of academic and behavioral data, as well as its disaggregation by gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and grade level to assess the acquisition by students of the indicators related to the DRSLs identified by the school. In addition, data showing student progress and growth with the special education and at-risk populations would contribute information to further the school's profile. Evergreen Junior High is strongly encouraged to continue its efforts to systematically collect and analyze pertinent student data to guide decisions made by the school.

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

The Visiting Team found the school profile data and comparisons to prior years and the state to be highly informative and accurate in explaining the school's strengths and limitations. Noted strengths at Evergreen Junior High School include exemplary teaching strategies and programs that have reduced the number of failing students and increased student achievement. It is evident from the surveys of the parents, staff members, and students that there is a high regard for the teachers and administration at Evergreen Junior High School. Parents provided exceptionally positive data regarding their experience with Evergreen, especially regarding the overall school environment, in school administration, and

office help. Student data provided overwhelmingly positive data about their schooling experience. From safety to adult support, from engagement in school to the availability of learning resources, students at Evergreen are having a positive experience in school. Departments and focus groups showed evidence of identifying areas for growth and strengths of their areas.

Like students and parents, the faculty provided exceptionally positive data regarding their experience with Evergreen Junior High, and identified the administration as being caring, supportive, and available to staff concerns.

To clearly define criteria for judging student performance in each area, it is recommended that departments develop assessment tools and common grading rubrics so that students enrolled in the same course are assessed using a similar process. As mentioned above, it is recommended data from at-risk and special education populations expand the information needed to make a more accurate analysis for future decision making.

The Visiting Team found a need for more parent and student involvement in decision making and goal setting in their focus groups.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

It is suggested that Evergreen Junior High collect data on the special education and at-risk groups comparing the prior four years in the areas of accountability. In addition, more parental and student involvement in decision making and goal setting is recommended.

CHAPTER 2: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (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?*

The Visiting Team found that the school's mission statement, beliefs, and DRSLs had not significantly changed since the last accreditation visit in 2004. The Visiting Team commends the focus group for its effort to fine tune the language of the mission statement to make it easy for all stakeholders (especially students)

to understand and remember. The same may be said for the school's vision statement.

The Visiting Team also appreciates the focus groups' efforts to revisit the language of the belief statements, and then limiting the number of belief statements. The Visiting Team would like to see more parental and student involvement in the development of future belief statements, DRSLs, vision and mission.

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

The DRSLs are clear and concise. Their supporting indicators fit well with the focus on student success as outlined in the mission statement.

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

It is the finding of the Visiting Team that appropriate assessments are in place to measure the institutionalized DRSL, Effective Communicator. The school uses the Direct Writing Assessment, CRT data, and formative assessments to determine student needs and address those needs. The teachers in all subject areas are collecting data on oral communication skills to review where the school is, where it is going, and how it will get there. Grade level teams split instruction on the Six Traits of Writing.

- 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 Visiting Team believes that there is a strong alignment between the school's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs with the policies and decisions made in support of the mission, beliefs and DRSLs. It is clear that the mission of the school, "Student Success," is at the heart of daily teaching practices.

The Visiting Team also feels that the shift from student oral presentations to service learning is timely and a good decision. The Visiting Team suggests that the school define a way to collect data that will help determine whether service learning is truly supporting the mission of student's success and the school's 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 departmental analyses, focus group reports, and interviews with teachers indicate that the staff is working collaboratively in grade level teams. These teams meet on a monthly basis, with departmental and faculty meetings taking place at the same intervals. The entire faculty focuses on ensuring the curriculum is viable and relevant. Most teachers and departments have created curriculum maps that also help them align student learning with core standards. Many teachers also collaborate often with each other across departments on an informal basis.

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

The Visiting Team witnessed a wide variety of teaching styles being incorporated in the implementation of the curriculum. Students were actively engaged in a variety of activities that encouraged the development of inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills. Teachers use open-ended questions, classroom discussions, peer and group explorations, role plays, etc. to engage students and enhance learning. Interviews with students indicated that classes were sufficiently challenging and that help is available when needed.

- 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 teachers work collaboratively to support various aspects of the DRSLs. The school has implemented the Effective Communicator DRSL. Interviews with teachers and classroom observations revealed that the oral communication aspect of the effective communicator DRSL is being well covered. The framework exists for continuing to collaboratively develop their curriculum. It is recommended that the teachers explicitly incorporate the DRSL language in their efforts. This will help clarify the goals of the school in the minds of the students.

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

Through discussions with teachers and classroom visits, the Visiting Team learned that teachers use a large variety of assessments to ensure that all students can reach the intended learning outcomes. Teachers use journaling, practice exams, informal classroom discussions, group and peer projects, etc. to assess students and determine how to meet the needs of all students. Evergreen Junior High also offers a variety of programs to help struggling students, such as after-

school tutoring, enrichment activities, open computer lab time, and service learning opportunities.

The Visiting Team recommends that the Evergreen Junior High faculty and staff continue to emphasize research-based instructional strategies and communicate their successes to the parents and community. Parents seem very satisfied with current results regarding student learning, but need to be more involved in all aspects of school planning.

Instruction:

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

The teachers at Evergreen Junior High use a wide array of learning strategies to enhance student learning. The Visiting Team observed student group work, hands-on activities, class discussions, lectures, demonstrations, oral reports, the use of Smart Boards, PowerPoint presentations, and peer collaboration.

Student interviews indicated, when the concepts and materials were not understood, the teachers would make an extra effort to ensure a better grasp of the content. The material was presented in a way as to make it come alive and be more meaningful. The Visiting Team observed the faculty to be hardworking, dedicated, and available to the students. Students are eager to participate in class, and are on task a high percentage of the time; they are also rewarded verbally for their participation in class. Teachers integrate technology into lessons, a practice that engages students in learning up-to-date information.

- 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 Visiting Team found that the faculty and staff embed the Effective Communicator DRSL into their lessons on a regular basis. After analyzing student progress, the faculty decided the weakest area of the Effective Communicator DRSL was oral communication. Each student is now required to do an oral presentation in each class. Data is still being collected on the effectiveness of this program. Teachers are encouraged to ask themselves: What do we want each student to learn? How will we know when each student has learned it? What learning experiences and teaching strategies best promote understanding? How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning? Cognizant adherence to these guiding questions and teacher follow-up helps students “learn to learn.” The administrators further encourage this pedagogy as they are visible in the classrooms and common areas encouraging an open dialogue with students and staff.

The Visiting Team has observed that the culture and expectations of the school have led to high academic achievement across all subject areas.

- 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?*

Granite School District provides professional development to help improve instructional strategies. The faculty also meets monthly in departments, committees and grade-level teams to determine professional development. The teachers feel by collaborating they learn new ways of approaching the instructional process. Many of the faculty also attend conferences put on by UEN and different organizations throughout the year.

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

The Visiting Team found that the majority of teachers at Evergreen Junior High are extremely knowledgeable in their content areas and well qualified to teach the curriculum. Almost all faculty members have advanced degrees or endorsements in their teaching content areas. This great understanding of their content allows the teachers to better explain concepts and help their students grasp all the material being taught. In talking to department heads, the Visiting Team noted that teachers were reflecting on their instructional approach and cognizant of areas they need to improve. In the school profile department analyses, teachers noted weak areas they plan to address in the near future within their departmental and grade-level team trainings. One area mentioned more than once was the need for further ESL training and certification so that teachers will be able to serve the growing diversity of their student population.

The teaching staff at Evergreen Junior High is well seasoned. Many teachers have 15 or more years of teaching experience. Staff turnover is low, and morale is high.

- 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 is well equipped with some of the latest of technology, including LCD projectors, Smart Boards, and voice enhancement systems in many classrooms. In addition, teachers have access to a variety of technology tools to assist them. The school has three computer labs available with 40 computers per lab. There is also a mobile laptop computer lab. The school is using My Access as a writing tool for students. The Visiting Team observed technology being used in the majority of the classrooms during instruction.

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?*

Benchmark assessments are used in each subject area to measure student progress, although the staff sees a need for further cross-curricular planning within the grade-level teams to establish school-wide collaboration and assessments. The eighth grade, in particular, is being assessed so frequently (by the Direct Writing Assessment, Iowa Tests, CRTs, and subject-area benchmarks) that some teachers see this as a bit of a detriment to the teaching/learning process.

- 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 Visiting Team observed the staff using multiple forms of assessment to fairly and equitably measure school-wide and individual progress in achieving learning objectives. Evidence of learning includes projects, portfolios, written tests, oral testing, and performance tasks. Using a variety of data, the teachers determine who is learning and who is not.

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

The Visiting Team observed the teachers and staff members were able to articulate how standardized test scores and quarterly academic grades are used to assess student proficiency. Students are placed in appropriate class levels based on available data.

- 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?*

From interviews and the review of the school's report, the Visiting Team concludes that the weekly professional development program, including department time and grade-level team time, is adequately meeting most needs and provides ample opportunity for teacher collaboration.

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

The Visiting Team found there seems to be general agreement among the teaching staff that the oral communication aspect of the Effective Communicator DRSL will complete the full implementation of this DRSL as evidenced by individual

teacher, state and national assessments. The Visiting Team encourages continued focus on the Effective Communicator DRSL as the school begins its transition to fully implement and incorporate the responsible citizen DRSL through the service learning program.

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 Visiting Team commends the leadership for its exemplary work and focus over the last few years in providing skillful stewardship and a strong working relationship with teachers and staff—a trusting relationship in which teachers are empowered in the decision making of the school. Collaboration is evident with the leadership of the school, and a continual commitment to high student performance is supported through a learning environment where there are high expectations for all students and teachers. In addition, the administration has promoted structures such as grade-level teaming and gifted/talented programs that have improved student performance and added a positive dimension to stakeholder perception to the school.

- 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 is clearly focused on student success. Resources are made readily available to support the work of teachers. The instructional goals of the school are articulated to staff, students, and parents. The school motto, “Make a Difference,” does not only apply to students, but to faculty and staff members as well. Evidence of this focus is the school’s goal for the next year, and that is focused on a community service project that incorporates the DRSL of Responsible Citizen. EJM has made great effort to employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative. Time is designated each Friday for teachers to collaborate and use current research and standards to guide their teaching for improvement in student learning. The Visiting Team found teachers implementing the school goal, oral presentations, and making students aware of the importance of communication skills in their lives. The faculty showed a strong commitment to using the My Access program across the curriculum.

- 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?*

School-wide policies and operational procedures are typically consistent with the school's beliefs and mission, and are designed to maximize opportunities for successful learning.

With the implementation of recommendations from the report, the Visiting Team is confident that under current leadership (both formal and informal), the management, operations, and resources of the school will continue and hopefully surpass their current effectiveness and efficiency.

- 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 leadership has consciously established teams of teachers to ensure that the responsibility of shared decision making is a major priority in their goal for student success. With the implementation of the recommendations from the report, the Visiting Team is confident that the leadership will provide for improved participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for all stakeholders (parents, community members, and students) in the planning and goal development of the school.

- 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 Visiting Team confirmed that the school has a daily advisory program that allows students and teachers to communicate about social issues (e.g., bullying, character development), grades, and individual matters. Informally, students mentioned that teachers were very approachable and made excellent advocates for student success.

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?

The Visiting Team has observed that Evergreen Junior High has implemented a comprehensive school improvement plan based on the analysis of the self-study of its stakeholders. The administration and faculty have connected the action plan to student data and assessment of that data. The departmental and focus group analyses were well thought out and openly honest about both strengths and recommendations. The faculty is strongly committed to working on the Effective Communicator and Responsive Citizenship DRSLs, as well as focusing on narrowing the gap for special education in content areas.

- 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 Visiting Team observed that Evergreen Junior High has well-organized and ongoing professional development with the goal of same assessments in departments and working across the curriculum. The staff members know where they are and where they want to be, and have a definite plan on how to get there. The Visiting Team has noted many instances of collaborative planning. It is commendable that the staff recognizes strengths within its own faculty and uses numerous in-house training. The staff and administration also show a definitive desire to research various avenues that would support their plan for student achievement. The students at Evergreen Junior High also recognize this dedication by their administration and staff on their behalf.

- 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 addresses the needs of the school community and is structured to support the needs of the school and the students. The action plan is data driven and provides a strong foundation for continued work in the future. The Visiting Team has observed a high level of commitment by the staff of Evergreen Junior High to the school action plan. There is also evidence—found through teacher interviews, focus group and department discussions, and student and parent discussions—showing that the administration and staff are committed to school-wide success of the action plan.

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

The Visiting Team found that Evergreen Junior High School has created conditions through its collaborative effort that support productive change and continuous improvement. The staff members are willing to take an honest look at themselves and their practices, and evaluate whether or not they are achieving their goals—and if not, what they can do to get to where they want to be. This willingness to constantly reflect on their practices and needs is highly commendable.

A survey was given to parents, students, faculty, and staff in 2009. Data was compiled in the following areas: Resources, Parent Involvement, Teachers Student Activities, Counselors & Administration, and Overall. The main concerns found in the survey were the issues of student relationships and communication with all stakeholders.

The Visiting Team recommends that the staff continue its efforts to assist struggling students and to use data to guide decisions within the school. The Visiting Team also recommends the continuing use of volunteers and the use of community volunteers in the decision-making efforts of the school.

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

Evergreen Junior High School has increased the number of DRSLs being addressed, focused on test data across the curriculum, and created a culture of success for every student. Students know what is expected of them in their classes, and are all aware of the value of learning. The students also commented that they value school. The teachers are commended for the hard work they do and for helping students take ownership of their learning. The Visiting Team found that the school has institutionalized the indicators for Effective Communication and continues to use the oral presentation rubric in several departments.

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

The Visiting Team noted that Evergreen Junior High has made significant progress in addressing the recommendations posed by the previous Visiting Team. The faculty and administration have worked to examine student learning by using a variety of data sources, and departmental teams are more productive using the same formative assessments. The block schedule and early release days are used effectively and dedicated to teaming and professional development by the various teams and departments.

CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY BUILDING

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

The Visiting Team was impressed by the sense of community that exists among the school's staff, parents, and students. Evergreen Junior High School is dedicated to promoting positive and productive relationships among students, teachers, and administrators. The staff shows great sensitivity to the developmental needs of the students, and is committed to helping students academically. For example, the school offers a tutoring program for students who need extra time, programs for diverse needs, gifted classes, athletics, student leadership programs, and music activities that support the school mission and DRSLs by providing opportunity for students to celebrate their talent, community service, and self-direction. The Visiting Team recommends that the staff continue its collaborative efforts within departments and with other schools. Also, the Visiting Team commends the school on the pursuit of a peer tutoring program to build relationships within the school.

The Visiting Team saw evidence of community being fostered by Evergreen Junior High School students, staff, parents, and administration. The school creates and sustains a learning environment that nurtures a sense of caring and belonging. The Visiting Team noted that both parents and students desire to build a greater sense of belonging by promoting student involvement. It was also observed that the school is willing to address the concerns of all the stakeholders and build positive relationships to enhance school improvement.

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

Evergreen Junior High School is working constantly to improve communication with the community. The staff reaches out to parents and families to engage them as partners in the learning process through a variety of programs: monthly School Community Council meetings, a monthly student newsletter, performances, community service projects, fundraisers, Power Grade, the school website, and parent-teacher conferences.

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

There is evidence that the school engages parents and families as partners in the learning process. Communication between the students' homes and the school is regular, two-way, and meaningful. Efforts have been made to reach out to the feeder elementary schools and area high schools; this is an ongoing process that is done at different levels throughout the school and should continue. The Visiting

Team recommends that the school include all stakeholders in decision making and improvement meetings.

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

The Visiting Team identified a battery of tests that are at the Evergreen's staff's disposal to assess student achievement. Through CRT, Iowa, My Access and Power Grade results, the staff identifies documents and uses data to pinpoint needs and plan school-wide initiatives. More importantly, the staff uses this data to disaggregate subgroups and individual student performance.

Creating clear goals tied to data and DRSLs will provide a focus so that all stakeholders may more easily identify gaps and provide progress toward the desired outcomes. The staff is also working on making more cross-curricular connections through curriculum mapping collaboration. The Visiting Team recommends that the staff continue its collaborative efforts across departments to provide more cross-curricular connections for students.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the faculty, staff, and administration for their commitment to change and improvement for the success of all students. They clearly recognize and accept their responsibility to provide their students with an education that will lead to a successful life.
- The Visiting Team commends the school for fostering a strong community among staff members as well as between the school and neighborhood communities.
- The Visiting Team commends the school, parents, and businesses for their dedication to supporting programs and activities at the school and providing opportunities for students to be engaged in learning and recreation during and outside of school hours.
- The Visiting Team commends the tenacity of the principal in providing a supportive and positive environment for teachers and students. In addition, the principal has provided excellent leadership in moving the school to a higher level of academic performance with the various programs, professional development, and curriculum needed for an exemplary school.

- Principal Grant has worked methodically to support teachers in order for them to provide the powerful teaching and learning experiences for students. His high expectations for his staff and students are balanced with a great deal of support and care.
- The administration is also commended on its ability to improve and maintain the morale of faculty, staff and community.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the faculty and leadership continue to study research-based instructional strategies and how to align their curriculum with the State Core, and provide additional training in teaching strategies for differentiated instruction.
- The Visiting Team recommends that teachers continue their curriculum mapping and develop level-appropriate formative assessments that are usable for their benchmarking, and that they also, provide information to parents about the purposes and expectations of assessments.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff review the school study recommendations and data for areas of improvement, gaps in scorers, and/or students not learning, and provide necessary resources to address those areas.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school involve more parents and students in the focus groups and action plan, so as to give those stakeholders another voice in the goals and direction of the school.